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"THE DESIRE OF LIFE," "AFTER THE PARDON"

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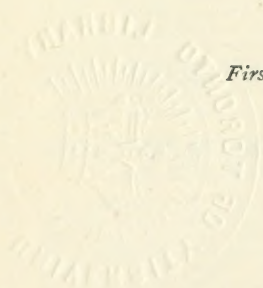
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TO THE READER

FRIENDLY reader, please be sincere. When your curious eyes have rested for a moment upon the wrapper of this volume and have read its title, don't give way to that quite conventional, wholly exterior, gesture, the shrug of the shoulders, that a love story causes, in sign of ironical boredom and mocking satiety. Don't shrug your shoulders, dear reader, don't imitate what so many other human beings will do, who, like you, are copying each other. Don't obey a superficial formula which is foreign to you: have the courage to be sincere. Yield to that interior, secret, sentimental yearning whereby every love tale—the humblest, the most ordinary—attracts me, you, others, by its subtle influence: yield once more to that need in learning of another love affair, a need that we all feel in the soul, a need never, never, entirely satisfied. Let yourself go to your own, our own, to the great human curiosity of love that accompanies us for ever throughout our life. Perhaps,

friendly reader, you are old and your sentimental days are dispersed in the mists of the past ; perhaps your heart is more incurably tired than your years are full and ripe ; perhaps you are young, but, alas ! lock within your breast a hard and barren stone. It doesn't matter, it doesn't matter ! Recall yourself from the most real and most silent depths of your mind ; the returning memories will make you for a moment believe, old dreamer, that time is abolished. In the mortal weariness of a heart that has spent almost all its energies of love, perhaps within you there will tremble a lost little fibre that still has feeling. And, finally, you, unfeeling youth, destined for triumphs as well as for desertions, does it not concern even you to assume your part as a proud and cold spectator of the ecstasies and martyrdoms of others ? O reader, O brother mine, O brother of these two hearts, of Diana Sforza and Paolo Ruffo, who in this their sentimental story loved and, perhaps, did not know how to love, loved and found raised and armed against their love each greater enemy of theirs—in themselves, in time, in fortune—inscribe within your mind and within your soul this passionate and sorrowful love mishap ; remember, compare, and understand, then no-

thing shall surprise you, as of yore when you loved and now when you love.

Don't be surprised, then, because every bit of this love story appears in the letters of Paolo to Diana, and that only from these letters does everything become clear and concise in their strange happenings, that only from these letters does the story throb with an unquenchable passionate life in its supreme joy and extreme despair. Ah, you know well that the love-letter—the first, the last ; many or few—is the whole of love. There is no man, the most austere, who has not torn open with a hand trembling with anxiety, the envelope of a letter, of *that* letter ; there is no man, the most sullen and the most churlish, who on a memorable day of his life has not bent over a sheet of paper, and with choking words has also poured out his rare and scorching tears. There is no woman who has not daringly confronted a fatal danger in writing a love-letter destined to be lost and found by a judge or a scoundrel ; there is no woman who has ever known how to resist the love-letter of a man, whom indeed she may seem to have resisted when he spoke to her. Reason, logic, wisdom, all these forces of the mind and conscience, knowing that the letter is the whole of love, knowing

that by the letter men and women fall in love, and are captured, overcome, and lost—these interior moral forces, with their rigorous promptings, endeavour to induce the woman, strive to persuade the man, not to write and not to read love-letters. It is in vain ! There is an ancient saying, threatening and tragic : *Scripta manent*. Confronted by it all, those who are in love pretend to be ignorant of Latin. As long as a man is in love, or deceives himself that he is in love—it is the same thing—the written word upon paper will always seem to him the best way to tell, the best way to express all the impetuosity and all the prostration of a soul from time to time exalted or cast down by love. As long as love is the *grande affaire* of a woman's heart she will fix her mortal eyes upon a love-letter and drink of its intoxicating poison, and never more will her blood and heart be cured of it.

Scripta manent. There remain the letters wherein is enclosed all the deep love and infinite tenderness of Paolo Ruffo for Diana Sforza, and if she who did not answer, and never knew how to, or never wished to trace with her white hand a word of love upon paper ; if she never, never answered, she read, perceived and understood all. Even to the end

these letters spoke for her feelings and surrounded her heart with passion and sweetness, so now they only, dearest reader, demand from your mind your judgment.

And do you, reader, judge according to your own heart and according to your own free will. When you have learnt all the cruel fate of these two, when you have measured what they felt, the one in his lofty and clamant sorrow, the other in her lofty silence, you will think, perhaps, that they were two fools in their double virtue of fidelity and abnegation and you will laugh at them ; or perhaps you will envy them and have an immense pity for them. But even this doesn't matter. You are free, reader mine, in your condemnation, in your absolution, in your pardon. You will always be just. For in love all are wrong and all are right—the accused, the defendants and the judges.

As for me, who with pious hands and mind have gathered and arranged these love pages and have told their end, I now with silent and patient expectation think of the unknown crowd that will turn over these pages : and I wait confidently. But whatever should come to me from this unknown, far-off crowd of other countries and other races ? Listen ! During

the seven lustrums—seven !—that I have been writing, every time a long or short novel, a tale or short story has been passed by me for press, and the volume, setting out, has accomplished its great journey round the world, for each of these books there has been a greater or less success of criticism and publicity; or perhaps there has been no success, just as I may have been able to render my dream living and forcible or have not succeeded in making a reality of it. But always, after a month, or six months, or a year, I have ended by receiving a note or a letter from some district of Italy, from some where abroad—a little obscure village, a small provincial town, a teeming metropolis. It would be a letter signed with a pseudonym, or with only a Christian name. This letter from Casalmonferrato, or Bucharest, or Diamante in Calabria, or Cincinnati in America would say: “Madam, how I wept with joy and sorrow while reading your book.” Well, when sooner or later this letter reached me from an unknown hand, from some one I should never see, for me the fate of my last book was decided, accomplished and perfected. Its success of publicity and notices vanished for me, vanished its mediocre success, vanished its failure. Some man or woman, a

soul—one only—far from me, different from me, a soul that lived of another stock, in another country, had wept for me and with me on the poor white pages printed in black characters, where I had tried to make live the creatures of my dream : someone had wept as my phantoms had wept in their supreme anguish. This spiritual communion sufficed for me, this sentimental communion due only to my humble and sincere emotion in tracing my stories of love and sorrow, due to the mysterious and powerful bond of souls in the presence of life, of truth, and of poesy. And always has this letter been sufficient to tell me that my work had not been a vain and sterile literary exercise ; but something simple and frank in its power of feeling.

Therefore I am waiting for the letter of that soul who shall have shed silent and solitary tears of human pity with me, and for me, over the luckless love of Diana and Paolo.

MATILDE SERAO.

UPPER ENGADINE, *Summer*, 1913.

PART I

“WHAT SHALL I DO WITHOUT EURYDICE?”



Rome, a night in May. . . .

“ I DON'T know you : you don't know me. I have never seen you ; shall I, perchance, ever see you ? You perhaps will never see me. Nevertheless my soul has been unexpectedly bound firmly to yours with a fetter the more tenacious and clinging, as it is hidden, odd, and mysterious : and I feel that I love you with all my strength, as if your face—are you young and beautiful ? I wonder ; I don't know you—shrouded in shade had charmed me for months and years, and has held and conquered me. Whoever is the lady who will receive my letters ? And will she ever receive them ? Impenetrable veils cover you and cling to you, O creature of my love ; and confronted by this strange obstacle, which I know not how to overcome, and perhaps shall never overcome, I tremble through you with admiration, emotion and adoration for the one thing of you that is known to me, irresistibly known, unconquerably known—your voice. The colour of your eyes never scintillated or flashed into my eyes, nor did the

proud and sweet expression of your glance ever come to exalt my heart ; nor did the kind or disdainful smile of your lips cause me to languish with hope or sadness : but I heard your voice and it vibrated within me and beats within me, and waves of emotion rise from my heart to my brain and scatter themselves, spreading over all my being. Last night, Lady, two or three hours ago, you were singing and I heard you singing. With lightning clearness I keep in memory in this May night that has followed my *great night*, all the fatal signs that accompanied your song, that song which has evoked from the depth of my icy and silent heart my pure and strong love for you. It was ten o'clock at night, a night already warm and fragrant with the Italian spring, in the kalends of May, I, silent and smoking, watched and did not notice my man packing my clothes in a large trunk, because to-morrow, as usual, I ought to set out for Paris and London : from those pleasant and monotonous movements of my servant a pleasing content for my imminent absence came upon me, although to countries known and visited so often—absence, distance, constant yearning of my restless soul ! With an instinctive movement—perhaps *someone* within my inmost life

called me ? I got up and went out upon the balcony of my little house, where the gentle hands and quiet taste of my sister Lisa have reared roses and lilies ; I scarcely glanced into the broad *via Boncompagni* where some passers-by were dallying in the fragrant night, where an occasional white dress of a woman disappeared past the sumptuous villas and pretty little houses ; I gazed instead for a long time at the spring sky that encircled Rome with a faint glimmer of stars. Suddenly you sang, and all my life was arrested within me. You were singing not very far away, in the same line as my balcony, but in the large villa surrounded by a dense, flowering garden that borders my little house and little garden. Your voice issued from a spacious open window not far from me, but invisible, because it is in the same line of façade, a broad window opening on to palm trees and the fragrant avenues of the vast garden from which your voice in the silence of the night reached most clearly. What a voice ! majestic, sonorous, penetrating, touching ; sometimes rising in a crystalline clearness, sometimes languishing, veiled and low, almost whispering, almost ceasing. A voice a little sad, even at moments childish, and afterwards much sadder ;

a voice that burst forth like a cry of liberation, that flickered out as if in a whisper of incurable melancholy—O lady, such a voice, evoking, invoking, that it is enough for me to write of it here confusedly to feel myself consumed by love. You were singing the noblest, the most expressive, the most harmonious *aria* that I have ever heard, the *aria* in which the lament of a pierced heart is especially sublime in its dignity and in its moderation ; the *aria* of Orpheus who weeps for, who demands so austere, so sweetly, his Eurydice, and in which Gluck has placed the pure tears and disconsolate grief of one who has lost his only love. ‘What shall I do without Eurydice?’ Thus anxiously with an impetuosity curbed by sweetness, your voice, no—your sorrowing soul, was asking. . . . ‘*Dove andrò senza il mio bene,*’ demanded your voice, vibrating with the loftiest ardour, with an expression of repressed pain. Then, O lady, I knew nothing more of myself and the world : my life was shut up within your voice, was merged within your mysterious anxiety, within your vibrant, mysterious soul. The night grows deeper, as is deeper the silence around me. Lady, I don’t know you, I don’t know whence you come, whither you go ; I don’t know if you

are free or a prisoner. I know nothing about you, Lady ; but I am yours, Mistress, yours, Unknown mistress mine, to-day, for ever, I am yours, the Unknown."

Rome, 4 May. . . .

FROM last night until this evening a double life has been seething and surging and fiercely fighting within me, who until yesterday used to pass calm and equal days in little inexpressible joys and small flitting melancholies. For twenty-four hours I have been jumping from the acutest sentimental voluptuousness to the aridness of reason. I feel my warm blood throb within my veins—when was it ever thus ? Never—and my heart surging beneath my throat, until after a moment waves of bitterness submerge me in a fatal nothingness. It has been the day of a madman that I have lived since yesterday until this evening, that of a madman in love, who trembles and agonizes through a spirit, since I am not sure that you exist, O lady of my love. But if you are that she who last night with her majestical voice, sweet and mournful, knocked at the doors of my heart and saw them open and her entering within, mistress mine, if

this creature exists, as I sometimes doubt, since now and then my reason mocks me, suggesting that I only dreamed the great cry of Orpheus who searches for Eurydice : if that she, who invincibly captured my soul and senses by her amorous and mournful appeal in the spring night, yesterday morning picked up my letter from a path in her garden, if the unknown she has read my first letter, if this she whom I love, this being whom I shall love until my dying eyes gaze upon their last sun has listened to my first words, she must once more learn about this first day of madness, about this first day of love. Read again, O lady of my sentimental dream—did I dream ? Perhaps you are a spirit—and learn what manner of thing is the powerful sway of love.

Do you know what I did last night when I had finished writing you, feverishly, a victim of a deep hallucination, my first letter ? I read it in a vehemence of enthusiasm, as I felt my whole mortal being exalted to my very words ; then I reread it and someone within me laughed at me, laughed at my mad words ! Hurling upon my table my letter lay for a little before my eyes while I wrestled with the mocking of my reason. Suddenly I conquered my inward scorn, seized

the letter and left my house, where my sweet sister Lisa was sleeping and my servants resting. It was three in the morning : not a soul in *via Boncompagni*, not a step, not a sound. Cautiously I walked twice round the stone railings that girdle the spacious garden, where amidst leafy trees and broad walks the noble villa, where you were singing yesterday evening, hides itself. I discovered where the gate opens through which carriages have to pass, I found out where the bell-push was and succeeded in reading on the gate-post upon a shining plate the words—*Villa Star*. I walked round once more and in a narrow adjacent street found upon a smaller door, that for tradesmen perhaps, the name repeated, *Star*. *Star* ! Not one shone in the sky ; everything was closed, silent, and dark upon earth at that hour of the night. For a second I hesitated ; but immediately afterwards I introduced a hand and an arm between two iron railings of the gate and forcibly shot my letter within. It did not fall very far : I saw it glistening white at the foot of a tree. Childishly, an immense desire came upon me to seize and have it again : I tried the lock of the gate like a boy or a thief, and then fled across the road and entered my house through its

silence and shadows. Very distressed, I threw myself upon my bed, smothering in the pillows my moral and physical agitation, and I only grew calm very slowly and after a long time. Towards dawn I slept and dreamed of you, O lady, O spirit, and, that the pleasing and cruel riddle might trouble me in my dreams, I saw you appear now very far off, uncatchable, elusive, now close to, almost touchable, but with face that was looking the other way, then close again, but with a face whose features, in my nightmare, I did not succeed in discovering; and I cried and moaned about it in my dream.

“At the first morning hour I was upon my balcony at the extreme corner towards *Villa Star*—what a splendid name, *Star*!—and leaning far over I saw my letter still shining white beneath the trees. Naturally, no one had taken it at that hour; but an immense disappointment struck me in my very heart, as if a blow from an enemy. I thought how that letter would remain there to rot with the dew, to grow yellow beneath the sun, and be wasted away in the damp earth, or how perhaps the rake of some gardener would carry it away, sweeping it among the fallen leaves. Roughly I closed the windows of my balcony, scornful of my destiny, scornful of my

dream and scornful of myself. I wanted to forget everything and at once take up again my original plans for departure; so jokingly I went to awaken my dear Lisa and gave minute, rapid, precise orders to my man for the departure. Monotonously, curbing, with a tenacious effort of the will, whatever there was unconsolable and consuming within me became of my shattered and destroyed dream, I performed a series of reasonable, normal actions, those of any peaceful man who is setting off quietly for Paris and London, who looks through his papers, tears up some and keeps others, writes P.P.C. cards, telephones to the office of the Wagons-Lits, sends some telegrams and finally decides to go to lunch with an old and good sweetheart, as he does every year before departing, through a feeling of gentle gratitude for a love that has been extinguished so long ago. Then suddenly, since it was almost noon, absent-mindedly I went out again upon my flowery balcony and casually my eyes fixed upon the garden of *Villa Star*. My letter was no longer beneath the large tree. Someone had picked it up and had taken it away; someone during a morning walk; someone . . . you, you, lady mine, mistress mine, you, only you; I am certain of it, like a

flash of lightning, as certain as I am of my death. My letter is in your hands : my intense and sincere words are beneath your eyes ; the vibrant voice of my lofty love is within your soul, dear creature, infinitely dear, as your voice that sadly and tenderly craves Eurydice and happiness is vibrating within my soul.

.

Where are you at this hour of the night, at this hour of your unexpected revelation, my soul ? I tremble on this May evening, as beautiful as the other, as I hold my breath to hear you. I have been listening for you for three hours. As one intoxicated, like a madman, I have been calling you for three hours and you do not answer me, and I am on the point of weeping and of crying out. You do not answer my sorrowful appeal, your divine woman's voice is not to be heard animating the spring evening. *Villa Star* has its windows wide open and illuminated, but it is silent and seems deserted, and its illumination in such silence makes me afraid. Where are you, O soul ? Have you ever been in that villa and have you ever sung ? I have been enquiring much and learning much this afternoon. I have learnt that *Villa Star* belongs

to a very old English lady who has bought it and has been living there for three years. Lady Rosalind Melville is seventy-five ; she has been the widow for twenty years of Ambassador Melville, who was accredited to Rome for several years. Her sons and daughters are middle-aged people who live in England, India, and Belgium ; she has no grandsons, as far as is known or who have ever come to Rome. She lives with a companion of fifty ; mostly she receives in the late afternoon her old friends of Roman society ; but she never receives in the evening. Where are you, where are you, my heart ? Why don't you answer me ? Why don't you sing ? Why do you let me despair alone in this second night of my love, alone without you, without your sublime voice ? Must I, then, die without ever having seen you, without even ever hearing you again ? I am dying without you.

Will you let me die ? He who loved you without knowing you, without seeing you, loves you with an intense love, a love that surely you will never meet with again on this earth, the unknown who prostrates before your image his whole self, all his being, must he, then, thus miserably perish ? O unknown one, in the name of that God whom you worship and to whom

I now turn in this night of useless, sterile, oppressive waiting, in this night of long agonizing disappointment, in the name of what ever you hold dearest in your soul, appear to me to-morrow after having heard this cry of anguish—to-morrow of your pity, of your compassion, of your humanity, so that a young man, strong, in the fulness of his energy and in the greater impetuosity of his love die not for you. By your God, who is mine, if you are not a fleeting shadow, if you are not a creature of my phantasy, if you are an actual being, if you are a woman, if you have a soul of goodness, if you have a heart of tenderness, if you picked up my first letter and know about me and my delirium, if at the same place to-morrow you shall pick up this second letter, in the name of God, in the name of human pity, in the name of our eternal Judge, appear to the unknown one, so that he may not die without having seen you.

Rome, 5 May. . . .

DIANA, it is a long time since my indifference has allowed me to put foot in a church. But the latest unheard of miracle that this morning has saved my fated life, that has given a real form

to the most absurd of dreams, that has exalted the purest and most impetuous of loves, deserved that all that was within me should prostrate itself before a merciful God. Do you know, Diana, where I have been with pious mind, to thank Him who sent you upon earth, who caused you to appear to me this morning in aspect ideally true, who let me be blessed by your vision, as no other man has ever been blessed, by the contemplation of your countenance, O my star of the morning, Diana, Diana ? I entered quite a little church, not very far from here, *Santa Maria della Vittoria*, which belongs to the house of Colonna and commemorates the battle of Lepanto and the heroism of their ancestor, Mark Antony, on that day of bloody triumph against the Turk. It was midday ; the little church was almost empty ; an old woman in the black garments of a devotee was murmuring her prayers, the marble whiteness of Bernini's Saint Theresa, who is losing, as it were, her life through the darts of divine love, was just touched by a sunbeam. I knelt down, as in the innocent days of my childhood, and, as in those days, my heart was white and pure because it was full of you. I bowed my face in my hands ; for when a mystical emotion pene-

trates us we must cover the eyes and only look within ourselves. I concentrated all my spiritual forces in a single flight of gratitude, in a single phrase uttered and repeated within me to God who examines hearts and feelings: "She exists, I have seen her; I can live, I can love her; I do love her." Vaguely, slowly, as I rose, as I signed myself in the old childish way, as I bowed before the altar before leaving, I still murmured to myself, as a Christian continues to murmur his prayers, the phrase in which my whole being has been absorbed since this morning—"She exists—I can love her—I love her. . . ." Then a last glance at the white transfigured face of Saint Teresa dying in incomparable spiritual joy. She is in ecstasy, the great Spaniard with the mind that was a furnace of love, so am I in ecstasy. Some confronted with a supreme happiness tremble, or exclaim, or weep with content, others become intoxicated with joy that knows no restraint. I from the minute, which I shall never forget, in which I saw you for the first time, have been invaded by a complete feeling of blessedness, by a perfect ecstasy. My cruel uncertainty, the flame that was scorching me, the anguish of waiting, the horrible suspicion that all this might be a raving of my mind, had

so exasperated my soul and nerves that the desired, invoked, and, yet unexpected, happiness of seeing you in your mortal shape, in your touching beauty, in the fascinating magnetism of your melancholy, has had a profound and very sweet reaction within me; a peculiar ecstasy causes waves of sweetness to course in my veins and I live in this ecstasy as if out of the world.

You are beautiful and you are sad, Diana. That your voice told me the other evening in expressions of quiet, persistent, disconsolate sorrow by the words of the wandering Greek poet, demanding of all the gods his Eurydice, by the austere and amorous harmonies of Gluck; that your dark, large, thoughtful eyes repeated to me, over which now and then the lashes are lowered so proudly, as if to hide your glance and your thoughts from the crowd; that your beautiful, flowery mouth told me that has long forgotten how to smile. For such a few moments I was able to gaze at you from afar, but not too far, at those eyes of yours so nobly sad, at that lovely mouth that you never wish to open in a smile. They pass before me these moments of such happiness, and perhaps they are worth a century of contemplation. All my morning was

spent in continuous going up and down from my house to the road, with futile excuses I made for myself or with no excuse ; and each precipitous flight, each slow pacing up and down of mine augmented my unreasonable impatience and increased the turmoil of my interior disquiet. My second letter, boy-like, shot between the bars of the gate of *Villa Star*, during the night, had in the morning been picked up and carried away, and it was my unshakable conviction, my great illusion that you—you—picked it up and read it. But you were slow to appear and discouragement fettered me increasingly, and I began to believe no more in your existence, and again began to consider myself an idiot and a fool. When suddenly from the middle of the road I saw the gate of *Villa Star* open, throwing wide apart its two portals ; a splendid equipage approached from the little side street. Descending the steps of the vestibule an old lady—Lady Rosalind Melville—with white hair shining like silver crossed the garden, a man, tall, lean, dried-up, with thin clean-shaven face, a man already advanced in years, accompanied her. Then you came, tall, willowy, in a dress of delicate grey and a black hat which threw a shadow over your light chestnut hair, that waves from the temples

to the neck ; in your white-gloved hands you clasped a bunch of white lilies. The gentleman helped Lady Melville into the carriage with a polite bow ; he also helped you without saying a word, then he too got in and the carriage left. Standing still, rooted to the spot, in the middle of *via Boncompagni*, I lived one of the supremest moments of my life. I observed and learnt and understood everything—your youth, your beauty, your sadness, your sedate and slightly haughty charm, and the quiet taste of your clothes and your few ornaments ; then the kind, almost motherly smile of Lady Melville, as she turned to speak to you and the affectionate, sympathetic way in which you listened to her ; then the cold and hard glance of the gentleman who admired you without speaking to you. Lady Melville is not your mother, but she loves you : that man, perhaps, is your father, but he stares at you so rudely. There leapt within me and overwhelmed me the vain desire of following your carriage like a poor man, like a beggar. But I waited for you two hours—two hours Diana—in the road, not daring to withdraw, going up and down a hundred times, trembling at every sound of wheels, sometimes standing still at the corner of the *Hôtel Excelsior*, anxious

with all my senses not to miss your return. And I did not miss it. When your carriage returned I was near *Villa Star* : then you saw and noticed me. At first *no*, then *yes, yes*. As on foot you waited for Lady Rosalind to get down slowly from the carriage your eyes rested on mine. It seemed to me as I choked with emotion that your glance grew deeper with sad thought ; it seemed to me that the lines of your wonderful mouth closed still tighter upon your tender secret. You raised to your face the white lilies and smelled them for a long time. Diana, I am presumptuous, I am a fool, I am a boy that hopes and believes, I am a man that dreams : but I believed that that gentle action was intended for me, that it wished to tell me something, I don't know what, I am not sure, something hidden, but silently told by you to me, told in that vague yet expressive action, by her who has read my two letters, by the unknown to the unknown, by her whose adorable name I already know—Diana, that name of a star ! You smelled the flowers and it seemed as if I saw your delicate face change colour, as if you were telling me by that change and that emotion something very beautiful, very sad, very mysterious—was it so, Diana ? Thus you dis-

adpeared. But in your spiritual shape, in your person fascinating with reality you are now and for ever completely in my heart, completely in my soul and I am like your temple, Diana, and I feel myself hallowed by a divine presence.

PAOLO.

6 *May*. . . .

DIANA, in the long soft sash of white silk of your white dress, that seemed to me to be of white flannel, an hour ago, when my eyes were blessed by your vision, you were wearing, Diana, heart of my heart, on the left side, three splendid white roses. Why are the flowers that you wear, dear soul, always white? Your face an hour ago was as white as your dress, or rather, was as white as your fresh roses, pure and magnificent as they, in spite of the fact that that divine countenance had not even a drop of blood. I have never seen a face more enchanting in its snowy whiteness. Above it your eyes were like two violet lakes, velvety and very dark, and the mouth was delineated there so innocently, in its youthful carmine outline, that still it dazzles me and melts my heart. Did you, an hour ago, find me with your glance? Had you

just time to observe your unknown lover, who is ever waiting for you, who always has his rewards for his humility and patience because suddenly you appear before him, as if summoned by his silent, overpowering tender yearning? You appear to him unexpectedly like a phantom being, yet the most charming among women. Who knows, who knows if you did observe me? I know nothing, wretched I. I was on the footpath opposite *Villa Melville* when you went out quite alone from the vestibule into the garden; you stopped for a moment to greet and speak with a lady who was waiting for you in a motor-car outside the garden, a lady whom I do not know, just as I do not know Lady Melville, and as I do not know, alas! anyone who knows you. It seemed to me—perhaps I dreamt it, perhaps I am deceived—that your dark violet eyes rested on me for a second; but can I believe my illusion, my dream? The motor set off swiftly with you and the lady, and fortunately I was just able to notice its number. Later I searched in a directory for the name of the owner: she is the Marchioness Sergianni of Perugia. My dear sister Lisa, who has spent one or two seasons in Perugia, to a vague question of mine, answered

that she knows the Marchioness Sergianni a little : but that she had seldom seen her in Rome. Perhaps I shall be able to know something more precise about you within a few days if Lisa will look up the Marchioness, if I can persuade her so far, without confessing to her my interest. Oh, Diana, everything that surrounds you is unknown to me ; every step that I endeavour to take towards you is hindered by this ignorance of mine ; every means that I should like to try to draw myself nearer, a little, only a little, if not to your beloved person, to your soul, seem to me risky and silly. You ought to know what it has cost me in time, in bribery, in cautious, minute enquiries, just the knowledge of your name, Diana Sforza, and your position as guest in the Melville house. Thus I can address a letter to you, posting it, or sending it by one of my servants, without throwing it into the garden. Between you and me everything is so uncertain, so deluding. Those first two letters thus thrown, like those of a little student to a seamstress, did you ever get them ? Have you ever read them ? Do you know why I love you ? Are they in your hands ? Is my love secret only known and guarded by you ? Do you know how this madness started and how it grew, that

fills me with throbbing joy ? Who will ascertain this ? Who will assure me that you know who the young man is, with the absorbed yet restless manner, whom you are always meeting in the street when you leave and when you return home ; that you know that it is he, that it is *that he* who loved you in a night in May, in Rome, when you sang so passionately into the silence, that he loves you and will always love you ? Perhaps you never picked up or read my first two letters ; perhaps you look upon me as the most indifferent of passers-by, because you know nothing about me ; and all is an empty raving of my own imagination.

Diana, I am a man and I am distressed and suffer deeply for love of you. I cannot go on thus without becoming desperate. At least I must know if my words, from my first cry of mystical enthusiasm for the touching womanly voice that caused me to leap from my indifference, reached you : if all my other letters arrived in your hands. I ask nothing else. What else can I request of you, star of the morning, gate of Heaven, of you who do not know me, for whom I am a stranger, a wayfarer, whose name and birthplace is unknown, and who, met by you for a moment, outside the throng, is suddenly

afterwards swallowed up by the throng ? I can ask nothing and wish nothing of Diana Sforza, to whom the name and person of Paolo Ruffo is unknown. Only can I ask for an anonymous pity for an anonymous passer-by who is suffering. Diana, you too have mourned and wept in secret, your large eyes tell it, in whose brown depths remains an old sorrow : your flower-like mouth never smiles, or very rarely, because something cruel within you has extinguished the desire of smiling ; your heart has felt the stings which have never entirely healed. Because of all this, Diana, hearken to me well. An hour after this letter to your name and surname has been brought by one of my servants to *Villa Star* and has been consigned to you, dear guest, but free in your actions, at Casa Melville, I will have a large bunch of red roses brought to you by a florist with my visiting card, whereon I shall only write *-hommages*. You only, and peculiarly, like white flowers, don't you ? Or perhaps those flowers were thus chosen accidentally by him who offered them to you. I know not. But I wish to send you living red roses, almost dark red roses, fragrant as all other roses put together : they shall be the symbol of the flame that vivifies and con-

sumes me for you : they shall incense your room and your person, as I should like to hide amongst the mystic perfumes of incense you and your nest. When you have received these flowers, I beg you, I implore you, I adjure you on my knees, wear, when I can see you, one of these roses at your waist : I shall understand that all my letters have reached you. Nothing else ! Nothing else ! Don't be frightened of this action of yours which will only be one of human pity. It will not tell me that you love me, it will not promise me that you will love me, it will not give me a proof of your condescension to my great adoration, it will not even promise me this outward condescension for the future. Diana, Diana, I am an honest, upright, good man who am writing to you, a man that suffers a thousand torments through his fatal doubt. If you have a heart open to womanly, Christian compassion : if you feel the tender tie for all those who suffer : if, in remembrance of your own secret hours of suffering, you wish that through you someone may be comforted—by all this, Diana, deign to assuage my sufferings, to give some hours of repose to my troubled spirit. A red rose to-morrow on your beloved person will tell me surely in a monosyllable

that you got all my letters. Nothing else ! But I shall also know another beautiful thing—that the heart of Diana Sforza feels pity, that her soul shines with goodness, and that he who thinks and dreams and writes of her, that he who loves her supremely can also adore her for these other virtues.

PAOLO.

7 May. . . .

THIS morning you did not leave the threshold of *Villa Star* ; nevertheless I saw you, not for a little but a long time. It was ten o'clock in the morning : you came down for a walk in the garden. You were not alone. That gentleman accompanied you—I am sure now that he isn't your father, for he is English and you are Italian—who was with you and Lady Melville on the very first day on which you appeared to me. This morning you were dressed in very pale blue, like an autumn sky after a heavy shower ; an airy white hat, of gauze, I think, was placed upon your wavy light chestnut hair, that softly follows the lines of the head and is gathered together in a large shining knot upon the neck. You were walking, you and the Eng-

lish gentleman—an old man, in fact, in spite of the robustness of his thin figure—slowly with measured steps and, in spite of the fact that you are tall and straight, the man, taller than you, inclined his head a little towards you as he looked at you. But you never looked at him ; you looked in front of you, or sometimes you fixed a wandering glance, it seemed to me, upon a tree or a plant. Now and then—and I spied upon all this from the corner of my balcony that overlooks one side of the Melville garden—the English old gentleman spoke a word to you, without smiling, almost without moving his lips, almost without expecting a reply ; nor did you ever answer him. Once only you gave a nod of agreement. Together you walked in the garden, up and down, ever in the same attitude : then you climbed again the steps of the colonnaded vestibule of *Villa Melville*. There you remained a little as if in thought and you raised your eyes in my direction. I think that then you became aware of him who was following you and almost spying upon you from the angle of his balcony amidst the hanging red geraniums of his sister Lisa. I think—I do not know.

Diana, I am sure that my red roses were presented to you yesterday, together with my card.

But this morning you had in your hands a bunch of white lilies of the valley and now and then you smelled their perfume. And I am the most unfortunate of men.

PAOLO.

The same Day.

DIANA, Diana, what happened yesterday and to-day, ridiculously, bafflingly, vexatiously and irreparably? An hour ago, I received here, in my house, in *Villa Ruffo*, a visiting-card from Lady Rosalind Melville addressed precisely to me. It said in French: *Merci pour les belles fleurs*. Nothing else. My unhappy red roses, then, never reached you: the stupid, hideous mistake of the florist or of a servant in Casa Melville gave them to the English old lady. What must Lady Rosalind have thought? Nothing, perhaps. Quietly, correctly she thanked her neighbour, the Italian gentleman—she must know of me—for this act of worldly homage without asking him for an explanation. These great English ladies are so used to acts of respect, to deeds of courtesy, that she need not have been at all surprised or ask anything about the giver. O my poor fragrant flowers, O my

poor red roses, that ought to have told you of my ardour and my suffering, that asked for a soft, comforting reply, poor speaking flowers, and now, who knows, where they have been placed—in a banal drawing-room by a flunkey ! All this is grotesque ; it is humiliating, it is exasperating, and I feel myself so confounded, so lost.

PAOLO.

9 May. . . .

I HAVE no longer lived during the two days in which I have not seen you leave the house, not even for a walk in the garden ; I have not lived for these two long eternal days in which you have disappeared, Diana. Everything is dark and cold around me, because my morning Star shines no more in my heaven of love, O Diana. All my uncurbable anxiety reveals itself in my eyes, in my words, in my actions ; and my eyes tire not of watching, staring at, and spying upon *Villa Star*, and every word of mine tends to investigate and discover the reason for your disappearance, and every action of mine is done to know—to know. How can I tell you of the way of the Cross I have traversed and re-made two or three times in these forty-eight hours,

encircling the house you live in and where a hundred times I thought that you are no more, and sometimes I thought that you never were there. I went round cautiously like a thief that has prepared his nefarious plan, tightening ever closer the meshes of his criminal desire around the place where a precious treasure is shut up. Oh, the people of the neighbourhood, of all this quarter of *via Boncompagni*, already follow me with eyes half surprised and mocking, those who have known me for years, and with glances of suspicion, the new neighbours ! I live no more, and I accomplish a series of the automatic, common actions of life in a state of profound distraction ; and I perform a series of disordered and confused actions, to the respectful surprise of my servant, Vincenzo, and the slightly melancholy wonderment of my sister Lisa. Now I am silent and absorbed, now struck by nervous attacks that reach even to unexpected outbreaks of anger, and, in fact, I am sinking, I am conquered by a fatal weariness. I no longer live I am outside life, and yet life presses me and tortures me : I no longer live because I see you no more, because I, like a fool, have placed all my mortal existence in your hands that ever lets it slip through them, because you do not love

me, because you do not know me, because you do not know who I am, because you are removed a few paces and yet are so distant, so immensely removed, as if you lived in another planet. A dreadful doubt pierces me : it is that I, with my mad love, with my daring letters, with my daring flowers, with this incessant siege of mine of *Villa Melville* and of you, of which so many are aware, have made you fly. Diana, who knows the fate of the letters which I threw for you into the garden ? Who knows where those letters were taken which were addressed to your name when I knew it ? Who knows who picked them up, who received them, who opened them and laughed at me and was indignant with me ? Who knows what strange, severe, contemptuous eyes may have read them to your face or behind your back ? Diana, those red roses, those flowers of ardent love, who knows, every one there—I don't know how many—may be aware that they were intended for you and not for Lady Melville. They were the flowers of a stranger, of a presumptuous person who had dared to write of love to a girl whom he does not know, who has dared to persist with his letters, five or six times in a few days, who has had the indiscretion and impudence to send her flowers

and had hoped, the fool, that the girl would wear them by way of a condescending token of reply. Who, who has made you disappear, to get you away from me—a parent, a friend, a jealous lover, or merely Lady Melville, or just *that man*, that gentleman with whom I have seen you twice, with the whitened temples and such a hard expression, who is not your father but who, because of his age, on the threshold of old age, forces upon you respect and obedience? Diana, who has taken you from me? And then—far more agonising for me—there is the suspicion that you alone, annoyed and offended with me, of your own free will, just to punish me for such folly, have withdrawn yourself from my adoration? Ah, yes! Yes, it must be so, it is miserable I, who have wounded you in your virtue and reserve with my sudden, fantastical and absurd love; with my confused, hysterical, sincere, indiscreet letters, puerile and too passionate; with my unheard-of pretensions to be seen, to be considered, to be pitied; with my unfortunate flowers which, nevertheless, besought you to answer me—this they asked of you, Diana Sforza, too distant, too proud, for a humble wayfarer, for a man almost lost in the crowd! I am nothing to you, Diana, and I

wanted big things of you, just because I love you. With this presumptuous and ridiculous pretext I wanted everything from you, inflicting you with this violent affection of mine, surrounding you with all the means at my disposal, finally requesting you—just think !—to answer me with one of my red roses in your hands and at your girdle. No, no one has forced you to fly from me : you and you only have desired to thrust me back into the throng, into the shade, whence I sought never to have escaped. This is the naked, brutal truth !

PAOLO RUFFO.

Rome, 10 May. . . .

THIS morning Lisa, my beloved sister, took pity on me. How often has it fallen to this delicate creature, so glowing with tenderness, to console her big, strong brother. When she saw me this morning, after three nights of insomnia, white, tired and exhausted, she went very pale and said to me in that coaxing voice of hers :—

“ Paolo, you are suffering and you won’t tell me from what illness ? ” I felt my heart break with her pity : I embraced her and wept upon her shoulders the bitter tears that were stifled

within me and were suffocating me. Lisa very sensibly, versed in all forms of sisterly consolation, let me weep, caressing my hair, delicately drying my face that was moist with tears with her soft handkerchief. Then she added in a low voice :—

“Tell me, Paolo, what I can do for you.”

My Lisa is an exceptional creature. I am thirty-two, she is twenty-eight; I am healthy and robust, she is delicate and small. Our dear mother was in the full splendour of her beauty and her health when she bore me; she was already threatened with death when she had Lisa, and that birth overcome her declining strength: she expired a year after the birth of little Lisa. She is a fine and fragrant flower; but the girl who has grown up without a mother has a soul firm and upright in its goodness, tenderness and charity. She had the chance of a brilliant match, but she refused the offer of her own free will; perhaps she was waiting in her secret soul for something else, for somebody else. Peacefully she keeps her secret deep within herself and does not speak of it, nor does she allow it to be spoken of; and so she pours abundantly upon me and upon all whom she loves—not many people—the rich gifts of her

soul, like a clear mountain stream. Her sisterly pity came this morning in time to save me from a fit of black desperation. And when she offered to help me so generously as best she could, so that I might have the means of consoling myself, I had the courage to ask her what stood nearest my heart, that she should go to the Marchioness Pia Sergianni and ask about you, Diana, and learn all about you who have vanished.

“But why do you wish this, Paolo?” Lisa asked me, fixing me with her clear, affectionate, loyal eyes.

“Because I love her,” I exclaimed with such an impetuous accent, that my Lisa lowered her eyes, quite troubled.

“I will go,” she replied, without another word.

But the Marchioness Pia Sergianni is away from Rome to-day: she will only return to-morrow. And only to-morrow will my tender sister be able to visit her, to speak to her of you, to hear about you, to tell me everything, in fact to bring me the balm of some news. Not before to-morrow! And when I shall have finished writing to you these sad words of mine, and when I have taken my letter to the post myself, so that it may reach you among the other letters and not attract attention, and so that you can

not even reject it, what shall I do afterwards ?
And to-night how shall I sleep ? To-morrow !
How many hours of torment and wearying sadness divide me from to-morrow ? To-morrow !
And if I have not the strength to live till to-morrow ?

PAOLO RUFFO.

10 May—Night. . . .

O BELOVED, O adored, O my only one, O heart of my heart, I have heard you, I have heard you, I have heard you. You have sung, you have spoken, you have answered. The three days of your disappearance, three days without light and air for me, three days without sleep and repose, all is cancelled by my heart that beats full of joy, all is cancelled by my aggravated nerves, and I am in a state of fervour and exaltation. Diana, star of my firmament, star of dawn and twilight, you have deigned with your singing to speak to your unfortunate lover, that he may be restored to life to the joy of living, to happiness. I kneel before you, ideal image of happiness, I kneel to thank you, with whatever is purest within me I prostrate myself in an act of devotion before you,

Diana, who have spoken to me. What was I doing an hour ago when suddenly I had the great gift of a revelation ? I had done everything and was beginning again to do everything to forget even for a little the acute pain of the deep wound that was bleeding within me : I had tried everything and sought to try still more to forget, to numb, to send to sleep the deep wound. I had gone out to look up some friends and then had left them in a hurry ; I entered my club and then suddenly came away ; I went into a theatre and only stayed there a few minutes, and at last I returned home towards eleven, worn out, exhausted, but feeling more keenly than ever my trouble, my only trouble, Diana, your absence. At home, as I lay stretched upon the soft cushions of a sofa, reading, smoking, thinking and smoking again, a torpor overcame me. When like the great words of Christ to Lazarus your voice crossed the space, crossed the night and raised me from the dead. You sang as on the first evening, you sang with that touching voice that makes me tremble with sadness, with that expression so intense and so restrained that it searches whatever is most sensitive and tender in my soul. You sang, Diana, the old haunting love melody

of Giambattista Pergolesi, the master who lived for art, for love and sorrow, the master who has breathed into music all he has suffered, the old love melody that Liszt liked, that Liszt the great enthusiast has adapted. This melody is well known to everyone who seeks in music the most intimate and profound composition—the old song of Nina, who is ill ; who seems to be asleep and perhaps is dead. You uttered the beautiful Italian song, soft and slow—“ *Tre giorni son che Nina. . . . A letto se ne andò. . . .*” O my matchless love, you have been ill for three days like Nina, like Pergolesi’s sweet Nina, you Diana, poor dear invalid, and I did not know it—stupid, ignoramus—I could not know it, and I have been unhappy as never was human creature in not seeing you, while you, forsooth, were suffering from a mysterious illness : and I tortured you with my letters, Diana, because I cannot live without seeing you, without hearing you. You sang, O perfect creature, of your immense pity, of your immense goodness, that music forgotten by many, that is a little sad, in fact, at bottom very sad, to tell me that your disappearance had been forced, to tell me that you were better and that I might revive to the sound of your voice, to the fascination that will

work upon me until death and beyond death, the fascination of your voice. Oh, how many things there are in that forgotten melody of Pergolesi, how many things to give balm to the wound I bear in my side. How many things you wished to express, Diana, and how many things I understood ; but I am alive, I am risen again, I adore you, I am ready afresh to suffer for you, to be tortured for you, because I know that you are pitiful to me, and that my malady is known to your noble mind and you wish to soothe it. How slow at first and then rapid is that music of Pergolesi, and how soft at first and then vibrant until at last with its great agonising cry : “ Wake up, Ninetta,” it caused the night and her firmament and the earth to whirl around me. “ Wake up, Ninetta,” because perhaps the sleeping Ninetta will never wake again from that long sleep. No, Diana, no.

You finished singing and for a long time I still heard your voice within me and my heart was filled to overflowing with it and my senses were intoxicated by it. I went down into *via Boncompagni*, and, humbly in the night shadows, I came before the threshold of *Villa Melville* in an act of adoration. The large verandah was open as usual ; I gazed at it for a long time from the

road, in the hope of seeing the divine lady appear who had removed my despair with a tender act of charity. I stretched my ears a long, long time in waiting; perhaps her sublime voice might be raised again in the night. But no more. The miracle was accomplished and ended. I bowed down and piously kissed the cold lock of the railings that surround the house where you are a guest, Diana. I returned: I wrote, and am writing, ever trembling with an indescribable emotion, because it was happiness itself whose image appeared to me in your singing that was intended for me only; because, O Lady, you are sweetness itself, because, my soul, you cannot see any one suffer, because you wished to pour out oil to heal my wound, O my Samaritan, O Ninetta, O poor dear invalid, who is healed, who does not sleep and does not want to sleep like the other Ninetta of Pergolesi! Ah, you live, O precious beauty, O precious goodness, O queen among queens, before whom I prostrate myself in adoration.

PAOLO RUFFO.

Rome, 11 May. . . .

My sister Lisa returned to-day towards half-past six from her visit to the Marchioness Pia Sergianni. I was waiting for her, trying to conquer my anxiety, going and coming aimlessly from the *salon* of our house to my little study. To my amazement when she returned home she did not join me at once. I listened for some minutes, growing more restless, and irritated, too, with Lisa for her delay. She knocked discreetly at the study door and came and seated herself opposite me on the other side of my writing-table. She turned her shoulders to the open balcony, perhaps on purpose—for it was the hour of twilight—and I could not well trace the lines of her face. The fingers of her long white hand tapped lightly on the table.

“Well, Lisa?” I asked, very impatiently.

“Well, Paolo,” she replied, very calmly, too calmly for my rising uneasiness.

“What have you learnt about her?”

“Little.”

“Little? Why little?”

“Because I asked the Marchioness Sergianni little,” she told me in a lower voice.

"You thought it better to ask little? You thought so, Lisa?" I exclaimed, curbing an outbreak with difficulty.

"Through delicacy, Paolo," she answered, with such tender gentleness that my anger fell at once.

"Lisa, Lisa mine, I adjure you, tell me all," I implored, in despair.

"Question me," she murmured, without looking at me. Why did this strange saying of my sister strike me more strongly than all her other answers? Why wouldn't Lisa speak? Why did she only wish to be questioned? Whatever was she frightened of saying if she talked too much?

"She is called Diana Sforza, isn't she?" I asked, sadly, almost choking. "Is she noble? Is she rich?"

"Most noble, Paolo: poor, very poor."

"And her family?"

"The father and mother are dead at Perugia. She has two brothers younger than herself and two little sisters, all very poor."

"And who looks after her and them?"

"A guardian, I think."

"That gentleman, perhaps, whom I have seen with her at *Villa Star*?"

"No," said Lisa vaguely, turning to look at the sunset in the opening of the window.

"Who, then, is he?"

"I don't know: I don't know him," said Lisa, letting the subject drop.

"But what is Lady Melville to Diana Sforza?" I resumed anxiously.

"Her greatest friend, her best protector. She has known her for many years in Rome. Diana was a baby . . ."

"Ah! I understand. These Englishwomen are so faithful. And the Marchioness Sergianni?"

"She takes a great interest in Diana Sforza, because she is a fellow citizen; but she can't do much for her."

"And what does she say about her?"

"That she is a perfect creature for her beauty and her virtues, but that she is most unfortunate."

"Why most unfortunate? Speak, Lisa, speak!"

"Because Diana Sforza is very poor and is so proud. She has a large family dependent on her and she is already twenty-five. In fact she is so alone in life to fight . . ."

"And what else? What else?"

"Nothing else, Paolo."

"Really, Lisa?"

"Most really, dear Paolo."

There was a short silence, and I interrupted.

"You are hiding something, Lisa : you won't tell me."

My sister leant a little across the table that divided us and furtively touched my hand with her sisterly hand in a little caress.

"I am so fond of you, Paolo, my brother."

"And I, Lisa mine, love you very tenderly," I exclaimed, with emotion.

"Truly? Truly? Then will you listen to my simple speech and follow my simple advice, Paolo?" she said, looking at me and fixing me with her good eyes full of sweetness, but also so persuasive.

"I don't know, Lisa; I can't promise," I replied, at the summit of moral dread.

"Leave Diana Sforza to her destiny," she said, in a firmer voice.

"No!" I cried with vehemence. "I love her."

"Forget her; leave, as you ought to have left a week ago; leave to-morrow; leave without turning back, without writing a word, without saying good-bye—leave, Paolo."

“ I love her . . . I love her . . . I love her.” I could only murmur, dully, gloomily.

“ You must not love her any more ; you must forget her ; you must leave.”

“ Why, Lisa, why ? ”

“ Because it is too late,” she said, gravely, looking at the purple sunset sky.

“ Oh Lisa, don’t kill me, tell me all.”

“ It is too late,” she replied, without looking at me, gazing at the sky.

“ Lisa, I wish to know all. I shall die if you don’t tell me everything.”

“ I have told you all,” she replied solemnly. She arose, withdrew with quiet step, without turning round, and disappeared from my eyes.

I have transcribed faithfully, word for word, the terrible dialogue between me and my sister. I believe in Lisa as in truth itself : I believe in the pure conscience of Lisa more than in my own ; I believe in the tenacious, foreseeing, powerful affection of Lisa for me—but what she has told me of the truth is so very terrible for my love, is such a ruin and death of my sentimental dream that I cannot accustom myself, resign myself to perish thus without another word, the one word capable of giving me the supreme blow. Diana, if your cruel destiny

now leads you away for ever from your poor unknown lover, and if he with all his vain, useless love cannot—alas!—snatch you from this destiny that he knows not, but feels the cruelty of; if I, Diana, have no means of conquering you, of taking you, of keeping you pressed to my bosom, to my strong and faithful heart; Diana, if it is too late, if it is really too late for my love, for me in your life; if this fatal “*too late*” is to cut off all the flowers of my adoration, if it is to dry up all the fresh, limpid springs of my love, if it is to destroy all that my love and my dream have created within me, around you, for you, Diana—well, you ought to declare it to me. You alone must tell me: “A man loves me, learn that it is too late to love me.” I have acquired the desperate right to learn this from you yourself; I have acquired it by my passionate yet tender feeling of adoration for you; I have acquired it by my immense devotion for you; I have acquired it by the gift I have made you, blindly, madly, of my interior life and mortal existence. Diana, answer! If it is too late, if it is really too late, if I ought to disappear—and I shall become nothing but a shadow—from the magic circle where you live, if I ought with my own hands to kill my love, if I ought to

forget you, if I ought to leave this house of mine where I have so strangely loved you, to return who knows when: if I ought to leave this street, the witness of my great passionate ardour, if I ought perhaps to leave Rome itself for a long time—you must impose all this upon me. You only I shall believe, you only I shall obey. Harken to me well. You have a white dress in which you appeared to me on one of the short fleeting days of my dying happiness as a lover; wear it to-morrow. But wrap it round your dear figure with a black sash, or black belt. Do not delay, I adjure you. As soon as possible tell him who will remember you sorrowfully all the course of his days, that you are the slave of a superior will. I shall see the face of ineffable beauty, but I shall see the black girdle which is the sign of grief and imprisonment. I shall bow my head over this outward sign of mourning for my love and I shall obey you, Diana, without looking behind, and I shall disappear.

PAOLO RUFFO.

Rome, 12 May. . . .

IN this last hour, Diana, may God bless with all his highest rewards your soul of truth, of virtue

and self-denial. This morning I watched you slowly descending the hall steps of *Villa Star*. You were alone, you walked into the depths of the garden ; you disappeared for a little and then reappeared, still alone. You were dressed completely in white, *as on that day* ; a black sash girdled your slim figure. You were fettered by mourning, and you wished to tell me that it is too late, really too late for me. How infinitely sad was your face this morning, Diana. Good-bye, then, Diana, my only love, my last love.

PAOLO RUFFO.

Paris, 15 June. . . .

NOBLE lady, permit a strange but warm admirer to offer you his sincere congratulations upon your approaching marriage. I should be wanting not only in a strict duty of courtesy, but I should betray an impulse of my mind, if on this auspicious occasion I did not add to the many other words of congratulation, which surely you are receiving on all sides, also my word of fervent felicitation. Gather it and accept it, please ; and be so good as not to confuse it with all the other cold, indifferent speeches of an

arid, worldly type. He who writes is in all sincerity rejoicing greatly at the high lot that is to be bestowed upon your beauty, your fascination, and your virtue.

I was ignorant until two days ago of such a splendid event. I was alone the other evening in a theatre of a jolly kind ; I had listened rather distractedly to the first act of a *pochade* that seemed to me rather extravagant ; in the interval I just glanced over the *New York Herald*, looking for news of Roman society, and, as I kept on searching, I read the notice which I am venturing to reproduce here word for word, without adorning my faithful translation : “ A marriage has been arranged for June 25 in Rome between one of the most beautiful and virtuous ladies of high Italian Society, Signorina Diana Sforza of Perugia, direct descendent of the important branch of the Sforzas which established itself in Umbria four hundred years ago, and the illustrious English gentleman, Sir Randolph Montagu, first counsellor of the English Embassy in Vienna, now on leave in Rome. The charming fiancée has been an orphan for three years, and is the eldest of several brothers and sisters : Lady Rosalind Melville, who is now her hostess, is a very dear friend of hers, and acts as a second

mother to her. This beautiful wedding will, in fact, be celebrated at *Villa Melville*. The bridegroom belongs to a very old and celebrated English family : he holds a distinguished place in diplomacy and will in a very few years be an ambassador of the United Kingdom. There is no doubt that Lady Diana Montagu will take to her new position abroad all the magic of her beauty and Italian grace."

I confess here, gentle lady, that I read this unexpected, if magnificent, announcement four or five times ; in fact, it may be said that I learnt the clauses by heart one by one in that *entr'acte*. As the second act of that very nonsensical farce appeared a tragedy to me I left the theatre, and without stopping, as I usually do, at a night restaurant or at one of the *cafés* of the *Boulevards*, I at once entered the *Hôtel Crillon* where I have been staying for over three weeks, and immediately wrote you a first letter of congratulation ; but on reading it again it seemed wanting to me, not expressing sufficiently my joy for your great joy. I tore it up ; in fact I tore up two or three others equally confused and lacking. Thus the night passed in my powerlessness to tell you how extremely pleased I am with your betrothal and how I

wish for the future Lady Diana Montagu every great splendour of wealth and power.

After a sleepless night—one sleeps so badly in this noisy Paris—yesterday morning, towards midday, I repaired to the Jockey Club of which I am not a member, although I could have the right to be so through my family name, but where I often go to look up a friend. He whom I asked for yesterday, with a dull and veiled anxiety, is the Duke of Campobello, a great Sicilian gentleman, a cosmopolitan, whose outstanding speciality it is to know all modern worldly history, in its every intrigue and ramification : I use these two suggestive words and beg your pardon for them, just to tell you the importance of the Duke of Campobello as a chronicler of all the open and secret news of high international society. He always lunches at the Jockey Club ; in fact, I found him there and made a pretence of lunching with him—one never is hungry in Paris—so that he could inform me much better than the powerful American paper of Paris about the great Sforza-Montagu espousals. He put me *au courant* minutely, with that precision and quiet cynicism which distinguish him ; and the story of the magnificent betrothal which is bringing

and will bring your perfect happiness, dear lady, and hence my own, has been noted for me in every detail. He began by lamenting casually that a splendid girl, of such a great name, full of every virtue, had to leave Italy for ever, since no Italian, noble or not noble—but wealthy—had ever thought of marrying her who had not a penny for dowry and who had, in fact, been entrusted with brothers and sisters without future and without fortune. But he suddenly added that the engagement of Diana Sforza to Sir Randolph Montagu was one of those great miracles of fortune which are now and then related as a fairy tale ; that only the great friendship and powerful protection of Lady Rosalind Melville could have thought of, dreamed of, and succeeded in securing such a match, to give Diana Sforza an exalted and firm position, to place her family that was so poor in a way of well-being and social dignity. The Duke of Campobello guessed that the freshness, the moral nobility, the pride of Diana Sforza had charmed the English diplomat ; but that the engagement was above all due to the persuasion of the English old lady and to the social meetings which she had procured for Sir Randolph and the Signorina Sforza. I swear

to you that only at that moment, in a flash of recollection, did I call to mind who your fiancé is : he who three or four times I observed by your side at *Villa Star*, in a carriage, in a motor-car : he who, because of his age and his white hairs I mistook for a moment for your father. Restraining as best I could my internal agitation, I said to the Duke of Campobello that surely, Signorina, your fiancé must be many years older than you.

“Very many more,” replied Campobello, coldly ; “perhaps thirty years.”

Campobello is a very precise man. Opposite us at another table, counsellors and secretaries of embassy were lunching together, foreigners and Frenchmen. There was there, too, Francis Norman, who is a living year-book of diplomacy. Campobello drew near to him and asked him *sotto voce* the age of Sir Randolph Montagu, first counsellor of the English Embassy at Vienna. Norman thought for a little before replying ; then he whispered a figure to the Duke of Campobello. He, triumphant and discreet in his success as a chronicler, returned to me and murmured :—

“Thirty-one years’ difference ; she is twenty-five, he fifty-six : a good shot, I guessed it.”

"He's an old man—an old man," I stammered, suppressing any other remark.

"Yes, an old man, well preserved ; it seems that claret and whisky preserve him : an old man, but within ten years Diana Sforza will be an ambassadress. And later, my friend—what a widow !

I ought to hear no more, and nothing more did I ask to know of my friends at the club. I returned to my hotel and tried to collect my memories and impressions. You know well that he who signs this letter is that young man who was suddenly subjugated by a strange folly, who dared to fall in love with you, noble lady, six weeks ago in Rome on a night in May, only because your deep, penetrating, touching voice had reached him and had pierced and touched his heart for ever. He is that daring young man who wrote you agitated but sincere letters of love, after having seen you three or four times in a garden, in the street, in a carriage, in a motor-car ; he is that very bold young man who sent you red roses and begged you to wear them ; it is he who beset you everywhere for days and days just to learn something about you, just to gaze at you for a moment. He it is who wrote to you, who so boldly in the fire of

his passion hoped, yes hoped strongly; believed, yes believed that his passion of love, pure and honourable, risen like a flame from a heart that seemed arid and dead for ever, risen from a soul that had not finished with the desire of loving and being loved, that this flame would kindle your mind. Yes, Paolo Ruffo believed that one day not far off Diana Sforza would love him. So Diana Sforza must absolve this mortal sin of amorous pride; Diana Sforza must have compassion and pardon this proud *certainty*, since it is what all true, genuine lovers possess. She must pardon his lofty hope, his lofty *certainty*, because he is young as Diana Sforza is young, because he is of the same race and same country; because he was sympathetic and ardent as was Diana Sforza when on that night in May her voice trembled and smouldered with restrained love as she invoked Eurydice and her happiness; because an unknown and mighty power had brought them together from afar and their lives in a surprising and overpowering encounter; because everything was favourable for the tender and pure mind of Diana Sforza to be moved by the intense, devoted, invincible love of Paolo Ruffo—everything!

Everything ? No ! She whom the fool, the boy, the simpleton who signs this letter had loved so childishly, so simply and in vain, was already at that hour of their fate the young fiancée of Sir Randolph Montagu, Englishman, patrician, diplomat, enormously wealthy, an old man, who was already thirty when his fiancée was born. She who on that fatal night sang with such melancholy the lament of Orpheus was not singing to attract and hold for ever the heart and feelings of Paolo Ruffo, but the better to enchant with her fascination Sir Randolph Montagu, who should in a little while give her riches, honours and the homage of kings and princes. That man who was always appearing beside Diana Sforza, coldly respectful, rarely offering a word, never smiling, scarcely looking at her, that man, that old man, was her betrothed—for months perhaps—and will in a few days be her bridegroom ; and the white flowers with which the girl adorned herself were those offered by him every day—the flowers of betrothal ! Nothing, nothing, nothing at all for the clumsy, wretched Paolo, whose modest fortune scarcely suffices to provide a suitable living for his sister Lisa and himself : nothing for Paolo who verily has arrived too late with his

foolish useless love, with his love that could be nothing else for Diana Sforza but a love ! Ah, I did not even arrive too late ; it is not even a question of time for my poor, foolish, poverty-stricken love—it is a question of money ! I have so very little of it, and Sir Randolph Montagu is very rich. In Rome I believed the mysterious words of my sister Lisa that a strange, insurmountable obstacle would divide me for ever from the lady that I loved and that I must not love her any more—idiot that I am, innocent and idiot ! In answer to my simple and humble prayers, in answer to my entreaties, but, above all, dear lady, to rid yourself of me, on that last day on which I saw you you wore the black girdle of the great interdict. Blindly I adored your virtue and sorrowfully blessed your virtue and believed in the Great Obstacle, whatever it might be. Behold the obstacle—money ! This said the black girdle of Diana Sforza that I considered a sign of human tenderness, of human pity. The black girdle of Diana Sforza said : “ You have no money ; you cannot marry me. You must not love me.” So be it !

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I thought that perhaps I ought to give a

present, even from afar off, to the new bride who will receive so many from relations and friends. In fact, a sentimental chain, an imaginary chain, used to bind me to her, a chain known only to us two, but secret; a life of interior life. A gift was and is necessary for the wedding of Diana Sforza. But where to find a jewel so precious, worthy to take a part with those most brilliant ones which will be given to her, with which Lady Diana Montagu will bedeck herself? Her beautiful head will scintillate with diamonds like a corner of the firmament and her pearls will be less white than her neck. A jewel, a jewel, an *ex-voto*—I ought to offer it before she becomes a bride and leaves us for ever. Here it is, then. It is the uncurbable, incurable scorn of my lot, scorn for her lot; it is the unconquerable disgust of life, of its filthiness, of its meanness; it is the nausea of all the scurvy human contracts by which beauty is sold, honour is sold, love is sold. Oh, what horror, what horror, Diana! What horror to sell yourself to an old man, to a foreigner—to sell yourself like a courtesan!

PAOLO RUFFO.

TELEGRAM.

Rome—Paris—2476. 15—17 June—7 A.M.

SIGNORINA DIANA SFORZA,

Villa Melville, via Boncompagni, Rome. A desperate man begs your pardon.

PAOLO RUFFO.

Paris, 17 June—7 P.M.

DIANA, I am leaving in two hours for Rome. I am coming to throw myself at your feet, to beat my forehead upon the earth, again to beg your pardon for my ignoble and unjust insult. But I am a desperate man ; I am losing you, and I cannot live without you. I feel that I am dying and I do not die. Perhaps if I see you again, God will permit me to die before your eyes.

PAOLO.

Rome, 18 June. . . .

DIANA, I have arrived, I am here, mortally tired with every weariness ; all my fury, all my scorn is changed into sorrow, all my curses are laments, all my imprecations are groans, all my terrible plans are melted into deep sighs, into big tears.

I, a man of thirty-two, am weeping all the tears which have accumulated since my first youth, all the tears which have fallen back upon my heart and have formed there in its depths a murky lake of bitter waters. I am alone in my house whence Lisa has departed for Rieti, to an old relation of ours, to pass away there the time of my absence. I am alone in this silent, deserted house, whence it seems to me as if yesterday a corpse—a very dear one—had left closed in her bier for her great journey. I am alone with this weeping that no one can assuage, that no one can console, I am alone with my hard and bitter sorrow. Like the most abandoned and miserable of human creatures I am alone with my tears, my oldest and most hidden, that rise and do not soothe my oppressed bosom and do not alleviate the grief that pierces me. Diana, Diana, what deep admiration and pity I have for you, O great soul ; for you, who like Iphigenia are going to the sacrifice and sigh not and lament not for your youth and your beauty ; you heroic like the Greek virgin, yet more heroic than she, because you are throwing away the happiness of an interior life for your brothers and sisters. They do not know this and do not perceive how your heart is bleeding ; they are happy and

smile and laugh because they are leading you to the sacrifice. But I only understand, I only know how dreadful, how terrible altogether is this gift that you are making of yourself in marrying an old man, a foreigner, in exiling yourself from your country, in going afar from those who love you with him whom you do not love, who is old, a stranger, and a foreigner. O Diana, creature of sublime goodness, I dared to insult you, despising you in a letter that was an impotent cry of jealousy, a harsh cry of scorn; but you understood all. You know that that letter of mine, more than all the others together, was a passionate love-letter, the letter of a despairing man who knows not how to slay himself, of a dying man who cannot die, the letter of one who sees his love brutally snatched away from him and laments and cries out. . . . Diana, never have I loved you so much as in that horrible letter that mortally offended your virginal modesty and your womanly dignity; it told you that only a mad passion had altered me in that fearful hour, that only the vertigo of a man who feels that he is losing his life could have guided my unconscious hand. Diana, I was in Paris amidst the tumult and indifference of that infernal and seductive city that could

not succeed in conquering my immense and secret sadness. When I learnt that they were stealing you from my absent love and from my dream, that yet lives in my heart, and that they were tearing you away from your country and your family, I lost the sight and hearing of real things and my blood became molten lead in my veins, in a mad rage against fate, in a savage jealousy against the old man who was snatching you away from my adoration and ever living hope. Then the words of horror escaped into my soul and escaped feverishly into my pen, and I had no peace until my most unfortunate letter was on the way to Italy, trembling with all my agony. But a few hours afterwards, as if in a mystic vision, your face appeared to me, white as the petal of a white rose, and your dear eyes were darker and sadder than ever, and like a fine ensanguined ribbon was your smileless mouth. Then, then, I felt my heart break in my bosom with tenderness, with compassion, with remorse, and I asked your pardon, prostrate before you with a heart overflowing with sorrow, before you, Iphigeria, who are renouncing love, renouncing joy, that you may devote yourself to an eternal sacrifice; you, pure virgin and mother of your orphaned

brothers and sisters, you who will never, never know in life the soft caresses of love and the intoxicating kiss of Passion. O Iphigenia !

I weep for you, Diana ; God has given you noble blood and a great name, but for sins that do not belong to you, of which you are ignorant, He is punishing you and yours, afflicting you with poverty. God gave you a dazzling beauty and adorned your soul, making it as brilliant as a holy gem, but He took away your father and mother ; God conceded you youth sweet and strong, but He entrusted to you the fate of your brothers and sisters, so that to you they turn and you they call, and you must lead them in life to a destiny of happiness and joy. I weep for you, dear Soul, because your blood and your name compel you not to fall lower, not to descend in the social scale, so that, alas ! your beauty and your virtue must become for yours the fortune which has been lost to them, so that your youth must take the responsible place of those who have gone ; so that, alas, all yourself no longer is your own, it belongs to the house of Sforza, the great house of Sforza, that languishes and perishes. All yourself no longer belongs to yourself, rather it belongs to the Sforza youths and maidens who cannot and must not live in

mediocrity, in obscurity, in penury. I weep for you, Diana, because of all the pure, lofty, splendid things in which you are rich in your heart and person—beauty, charm, grace, youth—you must make an offering upon a cruel altar to that God, cursed and execrated by all noble souls, to Money, that is the mould of good and evil on earth; but for you and me it is only evil, wholly evil. O, my Diana, you are like the young man, Joseph, in the Bible, bargained for and sold by his brethren.

I weep for myself. What am I to you, I, Paolo Ruffo of Rieti, a gentleman descended from quite an ancient house, which has gradually lost its immense wealth and social power; an illustrious house that has seen its splendour dimmed for mysterious and, perhaps, natural reasons; that has fallen, not exactly into poverty or restriction, but into middle-class ease: that used to be allied to all the great families of the Roman patriciate and gradually has celebrated marriages ever less important and whose last descendants, Lisa and I, will perhaps never have a family, preferring solitude and the end of our name to a mean and common marriage? What am I to you and those around you? Nothing. What am I to

you with my poor love that has all its pride in its sincerity, in its intensity, in its tenacity, that is deep and ardent, this love that is all in vain and useless because it is love and nothing more ? What can this useless love of mine do for you except perhaps to disturb, with its deep lament, the melancholy calm of your sacrifice ; of whatever use can this solitary and throbbing love be to your soul, the vibration of which you feel constantly around you, so that perhaps it weighs upon your mind which is exhilarated by a complete renunciation ? I weep for this poor love and for myself, for the man that had a fortune so unsuitable for his name and position in society and knew not how to increase it with his energy and toil ; a weak man who knew not how to break the environment of his habits in which his will has been cradled and sent to sleep ; a hesitating man that perceived not the responsibility of life and knew not how to create for himself career, renown, riches, forcibly seizing them from others with the violence of his desire and greed. Ah, I shall have passed through life thinking, dreaming and striving only to avoid misfortune, but incapable of doing good bravely. I should more and more have given myself up to dreams, where my griefs, my

regrets and my laments were lulled—until one night a voice awakened me from my dream and exalted all my faculties in feeling stronger than myself and confronted me with the lofty duty of being a man, of acting, of conquering, of causing myself to be loved by you, Diana, of having you for my bride, for my lady, my companion and my friend, you completely to myself, for all my life. But I know not how to do anything, Diana, to fight for and seize the great prize of victory. I have neither energy nor daring; I haven't sufficient money and I know not how to gain it or take it dishonestly from others. I haven't sufficient money to give you a life worthy of your rank and beauty; I haven't sufficient money for you to be able, my bride, to repair the fortunes of your people who hope for and expect it from you. I weep, you see, like the faint-hearted man I am, instead of trying some bold stroke that may direct elsewhere the stream of fate, I weep like an unhappy creature oppressed by an inexorable power; I weep instead of rousing myself, of shaking myself, of laughing and jeering at myself and my mad love, that can hope for nothing from Diana Sforza, that is becoming ridiculous and absurd to her who will be Lady Diana Montagu

within a week and will depart with her husband ; and I shall see her no more. I know not how to wish for anything ; I wish for nothing. All are right with regard to me ; and it is quite just, because I have forgotten how to live and how to act. I am a wretch to whom nothing is left in the hour of the agony of his life but the mean tears of a wench—mean scorching tears.

PAOLO.

Rome, 19 June. . . .

DIANA, will you fly with me ? Will you by a single blow break down the ever denser grey veils that have risen to encompass and envelop you, to hide from you for ever the face of happiness ? Will you live and love and be loved as never was a woman loved before ? Fly with me, Diana. Around you, whom I have not yet seen again, the bustle of your approaching marriage is to be felt, and every moment I leap up with agony and rage at each fresh proof. It doesn't matter : fly with me to-morrow—to-morrow night, Diana ! Let us fly far, far away, to the ends of the world, to such a measureless distance that never again, even until our death,

shall news reach us of our fatherland and families. To-morrow night together, Diana. Pull off from your finger the ring that old man has given you, that foreigner, and throw it away as if it were the broken fetter of your imprisonment. Don't look at the shining jewels or the bridal dresses or the exquisite gifts. Don't look at anything behind you and around you : look in front of you, where is love, Diana ; love that opens its arms to you, to clasp you and hold you to himself, pressed to his heart for ever. Diana, Diana, don't deny your soul and your faith in giving yourself to Sir Randolph Montagu ; don't destroy your heart and your conscience, don't break the cup of good wherein is the divine drink of love. Diana, don't renounce the only thing in the world that makes us greater than ourselves, the only thing that brings us nearer to heaven, the only thing that thrusts souls and senses out of this common terrestrial integument—love, Diana, love that has been given to the humblest and simplest human creatures. And would you alone renounce it ? Diana, let us fly together to-night. Don't look back ; act with a free soul, with a free heart : seek your life *where it is*. Don't look back. Be heedless of that which was and that which may

be ; forget the sterile daily duties, forget the arid social obligations, forget all the egoists who would make of you their victim, forget all those who to-morrow would be ingrates. The word you have given, the promise you have made, you must forget altogether. Without looking back, leave *Villa Melville* and come away with a man who loves you, who calls you, who wants you, who *must have you*, because you were destined to him by the Lord, because such is His law, because I love you, because I have over you the sacrosanct right of love. Diana, don't condemn yourself, by yourself, to the pain of hell on earth ; don't damn your soul ; don't marry Sir Randolph Montagu ; don't set out for England ; fly with me who am young, am strong, who adore you, who will snatch you away in a burning thicket of passion and you shall know nothing of time or space.

Diana, to-morrow night from midnight onwards throughout the night, in the little street adjacent to *Villa Melville*, a brown motor-car will wait for you until dawn. I shall be there waiting for you all the night. Let the evening pass, say good-bye to your fiancé and listen for his steps in the garden when he goes away : say good night to Lady Melville and wait till she

has retired and is asleep. When all is silence in *Villa Star*, place a cloak over your shoulders, a veil over your head and cross the villa with cautious step; descend the garden and open the little door in *via Sallustiana*. We shall set off immediately; we shall fly at an unheard of speed. In a few hours we shall be at the sea, at a port of embarkation, when at *Villa Melville* they will still be unaware of your flight. And no one shall ever find us again. Diana, no one around you loves you, not your brothers and sisters who are selling you for the price of your person, not Lady Melville who is giving you to that horrible man, not *he*, that cold and cynical old man. No one loves you, I only love you; I only adore you, and I shall be waiting for you to-morrow night to carry you away in my arms.

Diana, come to him who alone deserves you.

PAOLO RUFFO.

Rome, 20 June. . . .

I SOUGHT you eagerly this morning after midday, Diana, and found you not. I have not seen you, although I know you went out this morning and twice this afternoon with Lady Melville and Sir Randolph; but I did not meet you and

know not where you went—where, where ? To-night I am waiting for you in the little *via Sallustiana*, in a brown motor-car, which shall be closed, and the chauffeur will pretend to be asleep. To-night you must fly with me, Diana, so as not to kill your soul and pollute your body in marrying Montagu. To-night I am waiting for you ; I shall wait for you until dawn, for you to come and fall, silent and trembling, into my arms upon my strong, trusting and faithful bosom. To-night until the dawn !

PAOLO.

The same Day.

DIANA, it is already evening : in a few hours we shall be in the heart of the night. My only love, I am in agony between a divine hope and a terrible uncertainty ; within a few hours my life and my death will be decided. The man who since the day before yesterday has brought you my letters and notes, my servant, Vincenzo, watches me pale, absorbed and dispirited ; he asks me nothing, he obeys me quickly in silence. He knows and understands that this is the supreme hour, silently he looks me in the eyes to serve me better and more quickly. He

knows. Diana, remember—in the little *via Sallustiana* at the bottom corner of the garden. You must take ten steps after leaving the servants' door. Diana, I don't know what else to tell you—I don't know.

PAOLO.

21 June, Morning. . . .

DIANA, I waited for you all the night. You did not come, you did not come. I returned home as the sun rose; then I closed the shutters and made a deep darkness and great silence about me and called upon sleep, the brother of death, and he overcame me heavily, mastering me. You did not come. Perhaps you were afraid, perhaps you did not know how to leave the house, perhaps you could not find a way of pulling the bolt or opening the doors without making a noise. To-night, Diana, I will wait for you again, from midnight until dawn, at the same place. Pity you, pity me!

PAOLO.

Rome, 22 June, Morning. . . .

NOTHING, nothing, nothing! An interminable, agonising, mad, mad night of useless waiting.

I am a madman. Only a madman can think and wish and act as I do. How long have I been a madman ? Perhaps only since three days ago when in a fever of love and grief I proposed that you should break off your marriage with Sir Randolph Montagu and renounce your riches and name for a great passion ; for three days I have been a madman in proposing that you should dishonour yourself for me in flying with me, you who do not love me. Since three days ago ? Perhaps I have been mad since that evening in Paris when I read that you were to marry, and understood and knew nothing more of what was passing around me. Only from that time ? Perhaps—yes, without any perhaps—I have been mad since that fatal evening on which I heard you sing for the first time. Ah Diana, I am mad and cannot live without Eurydice. Diana, for the third night, for the last one, I shall wait for you in the same place, at the same hour—the last night. If by the dawn Eurydice has not come, if you do not come to me, Diana, before the dawn, to fly with me, I shall shoot myself with my revolver in that solitary *via Sallustiana*, at the corner of the garden of *Villa Star*.

PAOLO.

Rome, 23 June. . . .

AT four o'clock this morning I looked at my watch again for the thousandth time. I got out of the car, my chauffeur had fallen into a deep sleep after being so long awake, and I walked a little up and down in the deserted *via Sallustiana*. I was calm, indifferent, cold in blood and soul ; I looked at the sky whence must come for me the appointed end. Suddenly the very pale brightness of the dawn, scarcely perceptible to the human eye, rising from the horizon over there towards Rome below, armed my hand, that was decided and firm. Who at that moment called me in my interior life ? Someone called me, and I stopped my action, listening carefully if again the voice that does not sound in mortal ears but vibrates in the soul should call me. I lifted my eyes, and what I had not seen in three long nights of waiting and watching and spying round *Villa Star*, what I had never observed as I looked into the large, shady garden, and examined the balconies and windows, which were always closed and dark, I discovered at the moment when I ought to have ended this odious, hateful life of mine. At that moment a balcony on the second floor,

at the corner of *Villa Star* that looks on to *via Sallustiana*, was suffused with a soft light, as if by a lamp within, not too far away, but shaded. That balcony was high up, the windows were closed, but the slender light within, in the still dark shadows of the night, was outlined clearly. My glance was attracted by that light with a mysterious and growing anxiety; my heart that scarcely had strength to beat after three nights of lonely agony received as it were an impulse of resurrection, and I trembled as at the approach of some great portent. In that halo of light, something clearer, white, but more defined, appeared and became outlined in spite of the distance. It was your tall and slender figure dressed in white: it was your white face. It was you, Diana, who appeared to me, who had rested your forehead against the shining glass and remained there for some time—I don't know how long—before my conquered and subdued gaze. I could not distinguish if your eyes were turned towards me, if they saw me and looked at me. I could not distinguish the expression of your countenance; I was so far off, you so high up; the night was so dark, the light in your room so fitful and the window-glass shone so much. Only the lines of your dear

figure and face, also diffused in the inner cloudy light, filled my eyes and filled my nerves and fibres with you, and all my suspended and captured mind. How long did this gentle, sweet, strong, powerful entrancement last which you had worked upon me from afar in the night full of tragedy—you, vanishing phantom behind the glass—upon me a man of nerves and blood and flesh? Suddenly, as if in a dream, your vision withdrew and disappeared. The light also became more fitful, as it went further away, and vanished. The dawn had arisen, and I was saved from death by you.

Diana, now I know that you do not love me : but I know that you had an irresistible pity for me. I know, I am certain, that you do not love me because you have not been shaken, disturbed, and conquered by my violent passionate longing and rapture, because you have resisted the impetuous torrent of my love that would overwhelm you. But I know and am sure that my amorous frenzy has softened your feelings, that you do not love me but believe in the power of my love ; so I know, then, that you believed in my will for death, but did not wish me to die. Diana, if you had delayed still a few minutes that which I threatened in my desper-

tion had been accomplished ; just a few minutes more and the returning night watchmen, tired and sleepy, would have stumbled, in the cold morning light, upon a corpse there on the ground, lying a little away from the garden of *Villa Star*, and my awakened, frightened chauffeur would not have known what to tell them. But the last minutes had not passed and, just as if you had counted them one by one, you, afar off and a stranger, who do not love me and do not know me, who will never speak to me and whose hand will never be stretched forth to touch mine, appeared unto me, even when Death was behind my shoulder and stretching his hands over me. You snatched away that hand merely by appearing at a window with your thoughtful brow, of whose thoughts I am ignorant, with your sad eyes, whose secret I know not, with your closed mouth whose smile I shall, perhaps, never see. You do not love me, but, through pity of a poor human creature that had reached, and had been impelled to an extreme step by his tragic will, and only through compassion, have you conquered death. I am saved, I live, I love you ; but my deep feeling for you is all composed of an incomparable sadness.

Diana, your goodness is a precious treasure, one of the many shining gems by which your soul is beautified. And it is due to this goodness that I still breathe, see the sun, think and live—only to this goodness. Through it you have forgotten that these are the last days of your uncertain, anxious, poor existence and that within two days—two days!—all your lot will be changed; through it, Diana, you have put out of your heart the festivities that already were surrounding you and that are being prepared for you; through this goodness you have forgotten that at a single blow Fortune is placing you at the height of every realised desire.

And you watched the night through, Diana Sforza, the betrothed of Sir Randolph Montagu and his bride of the day after to-morrow—the day after to-morrow!—you kept watch for Paolo Ruffo, your mad lover, unknown to you and a passer-by. You watched for him who was suffering and smothering his cries for three nights, down below in the darkness and solitude, clenching his teeth and hands at the back of the motor-car. You, Diana, star of the morning, maiden most pure, kept watch, not the watch of the happy fiancée, but the watch of one who

knows that hour by hour death is drawing nearer to someone, a neighbour. You kept watch so that Paolo Ruffo, who is nothing to you, who will never be anything to you, might not die. For that you kept your eyes fixed upon the dial of your watch ; you got up and appeared and looked into the street seeking that shadow amongst the shadows, and in but appearing you tied again the thread of my life. Through your goodness, I live. Ah, Diana, Diana, how great is goodness ! But it is nothing, nothing, nothing to love !

I tremble with emotion as I bless you. I shall ever remember the great vigil, in which pity kept you alert and awake, and gave you the means of accomplishing a miracle, merely by your phantom presence, by your presence in the air : I shall always remember. But nothing to-day equals my sadness. You have rent assunder my desire of death, and without you I know not what to do with this miserable life of mine, and I know not what shall happen to wretched me without you. May you be ever exalted, O creature of every goodness ; but I cannot die and I cannot live without Eurydice.

PAOLO RUFFO.

Rome, 24 June. . . .

THE beggar amidst the crowd of idlers in the street says that he is waiting for the departure of the newly-married couple from the English Embassy. Moreover the beggar, who has been there for two hours, continues to wait, and he meditates, or rather than meditate, he counts and measures and calculates—the pale, silent beggar—in his mind that is fixed on one thought : “ What must the dress of pink *crepe de chine* have cost, covered by a tunic of precious white lace and fitted to the figure by oriental galloon of silver and gold, this lovely and sumptuous dress in which just now Donna Diana Sforza entered the English Embassy to marry by the civil rite Sir Randolph Montagu, and who will soon come out upon his arm as Lady Randolph Montagu ? That dress cannot have cost less than a thousand lire. And that rope of pearls that Donna Diana Sforza wore round the neck, a single rope of large pearls, fastened beneath the white nun’s veiling, which, it seemed to me, covered the bosom and neck behind, by a round clasp, an emerald surrounded by diamonds ? That rope could not have cost less than eight

or ten thousand lire with the clasp ? And the emerald earrings, so large that it seemed as if they caused the beautiful face to droop through their weight ; they could not have cost less than five thousand lire ? I saw, too, bracelets laden with precious gems, shining upon the white gloves, as shone also the knob of the white lace parasol, which in the carriage she held lowered, rather too much lowered, so as not to be seen by the people in *via Venti Settembre*. All that—flashing bracelets, shining parasol-knob must have cost at least two or three thousand lire. Who knows how many rings, wonderful for their precious stones and workmanship, adorned the hands of Donna Diana Sforza ? But as she wore her gloves I could not value how much they cost. Presently up there, to sign the nuptial contract by which she becomes Lady Montagu, Donna Diana will take off her gloves and will show her white hands upon which are weighing, perhaps, rings rich with marvellous stones. Maybe that her face is whiter than her hands as she stoops up there in the Embassy drawing-room to sign. Her face was whiter, so transparent in its whiteness, than I have ever seen it as she entered the hall of the Embassy ; and I, in my character of an obstinate and daring

beggar, almost reached the staircase, the better to see her. I did not see her eyes, hidden beneath the pride of her closed eyelids ; I saw only the lustre of her magnificent pearls and the green rays of the immense emeralds at the little ears—fifteen or twenty thousand lire altogether.

“The two sisters of Donna Diana”—the beggar continues to say, who has been thrust back into the *via Venti Settembre*, courteously but firmly, by the porter of the English Embassy—“are very charming. The elder, Olive Sforza, twenty, I think, is a brunette with a countenance of living ivory, tinged with health and youth, the younger, Anna, will be perhaps fifteen, and is a blonde with hair inclined to be red, a creamy complexion, with eyes of pure blue ; both have the perfect distinction of features, deportment and manners of their ancient lineage and good blood. Their toilettes were the same, because they were according to the English custom the bridesmaids of their sister, of soft white chiffon with fine silver embroidery ; on their young heads were poised large hats covered with soft flowing white feathers. They wore *sautoirs* of gold and pearls on the breast and chiffon sashes that blew about their figures like wings. These two costumes

with hats, jewellery, and parasols could surely not have cost less than five hundred lire apiece, and it seems that they are the gift of the bridegroom, Sir Randolph Montagu, to his young sisters-in-law. The two brothers of Donna Diana, Fabio and Piero Sforza, were also in the procession ; one is seventeen, the other thirteen. Both are very handsome and serious and, of course, very fashionable. The bride's god-mother, Lady Rosalind Melville, to whom Sir Randolph gave his arm, was majestic in her sumptuous dress of purple brocade. She was wearing one hundred thousand lire worth of jewels ; so said the bystanders in the courtyard of the Embassy who knew her. Then the beggar was requested to go outside and could hear nothing more. However, before being placed gently at the door, as he certainly deserved to be, for a beggar has nothing to do with the procession of an enormously rich bridal pair—this beggar managed to get a good look at the bridegroom. Sir Randolph Montagu was in the height of English fashion. His face was more rigid than ever, his eyes of steel blue were cold and proud, his gestures rare and composed. He is fifty-six—but just now in the half light of the courtyard he seemed seventy—

exactly thirty-five years older than his bride. In the street the beggar continues to calculate, where already the crowd grows thinner, and where he remains alone—because he is a tenacious and very daring beggar—to wait until Lady Montagu reappears.

“When Lady Montagu appears not only will she be no longer Diana Sforza but she will be no longer poor. Sir Randolph Montagu has an income of one hundred and fifty thousand lire and this great fortune of his will procure for him even more rapid promotion in diplomacy : within a very few years he will be ambassador and Lady Montagu ambassadress. In England he possesses a castle in Sussex, Montagu Castle, and a big country house, Springfield Court, near Chelmsford ; over there in his own country he has lands and woods, lakes and mills, a very valuable collection of stamps and magnificent horses and dogs. Naturally when he is in Rome or Berlin his state is that of a rich foreigner on his travels, but in England he assumes the imposing state of the great families. At this moment, then, Diana Sforza, called Eurydice by the beggar in a fit of envious frenzy, is becoming a great foreign lady with a great income, that is her husband's it is true, but of

which she will spend, through a handsome allowance, liberally on herself and relations without having to render account ; so much does she owe to the lordly magnificence of her husband. When she is in England a sister or a brother will be her guests in turns ; who knows but that in their visits they may find a means of supporting their own lives even more firmly ? The English are incomparable friends and protectors when they become friends and protectors. The house of Sforza of Perugia that was lost is returning to its ancient splendour ; Olive and Anna, Fabio and Piero are again *signori*, apart from their name and blood. How deathly pale is the bride, in her dress that is too pink for her pallor, as she descends the great staircase of the Embassy, married and now upon the arm of her husband, Sir Randolph Montagu. The bridal pair descend slowly in front of the others ; Lady Montagu scarcely rests her gloveless left hand upon the arm of Sir Randolph—this hand that is less pale than the face beneath the hat with its soft pink feathers—and the couple do not look at each other or speak. He sees it all does the beggar, with cheeks that burn with all the blood that in a wave has rushed to his brain, the beggar with

the eyes glowing like coals. Lady Diana lets her right hand hang by her side, and the bouquet of orange blossoms hangs too and almost falls from the fingers that scarcely clasp it. A little sprig of orange blossom is in Sir Randolph's buttonhole. He is the husband, the lord, the master of Diana Sforza. The mad beggar would like to cry out loudly, clamorously—*Eurydice*—with a shout that should reach even to heaven and cause the pallid, silent bride to turn her face. But no sound escapes the lips of the beggar; the pale bride does not tremble, does not turn round, has no desire to turn round. She knows that the beggar is there: but now no longer can she give him charity.

“Let her go upon her broad and dazzling way, the lovely bride whose face is as pale as death, whose eyes refuse to look at anything, and whose lips know not how to open in a smile; let her go upon her way where she shall find the softest pleasures, the most thrilling amusements, the most refined delights that may console her for her frozen heart, her frozen soul, her life without love. Let her go and forget and steep herself in the festivities of vanity and ambition; and let her forget the beggar she is leaving, who is thrust into a corner of the street, miserable,

forsaken, with no longer courage to die, no longer courage to live. Let Lady Montagu, the proud foreign lady, when, with her flashing tiara and three white feathers she sits in the presence of royalty that is descended from the Plantagenets, and seems to be at the height of her prosperity, forget that, when she was only Diana Sforza, beautiful and poor, and sang so passionately on a night in spring, a man through love gave her his soul and his blood. Let her forget the beggar, Paolo Ruffo. He mad, like Ixion, clasped a cloud with his arms, believing it to be a human being, a woman, and the cloud vanished and Ixion's tired arms fell back empty; and empty is his heart and everything around him is empty.

“Let the pale bride go, let her vanish without looking back, preferring to forget, to forget quickly, that, in the crowd, in the shade, in the silence, there remains he who alone knew how to love her; let her go, let her vanish, as she did an hour ago, for ever from the existence of the wretch. No one really knows if Eurydice who yielded to the appeal of Plato ever loved Orpheus, who loved her so much. Perhaps no one knows if she did not prefer the scorching Inferno, her red king, and the fantastic riches

of the under world, to the tender and serious poet, to the idyllic countryside of Greece. Eurydice turned back and remained with Pluto. No one knows if she ever loved Orpheus. I know : Eurydice did not love Orpheus. And the rest is silence.

PAOLO RUFFO.

Rome, 26 June. . . .

MY routed emotional energy, my vanquished moral force, my discouraged senses did not allow me, O creature of my dream, O lady of my life, to assist at the religious ceremonies of your marriage. Man is a poor, feeble creature : sometimes in a fury of love or hate he surpasses himself, but immediately he pays the reckoning for his fleeting pride. The passion week through which I have passed, in a fever that has consumed my blood ; the week in which I thought to touch the height of happiness in carrying you off with me for ever, and in which, instead, I touched with my hand the hand of death, this supreme and terrible week in which loving you as never again in this world man will love you, as a hundred men taken together would not know how to love you, I lost you beneath my

very eyes—this week has wrecked my whole existence. Yesterday I learnt that you will this morning be twice united in religious ceremonies to Sir Randolph Montagu, the first time for him, who remains an Anglican in the English Church in *via Nazionale*, the second time for you, who are a Catholic and are to remain a Catholic, in our great basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore. I knew it all, but this morning I had neither the physical strength nor the moral courage to get up from the sofa, on which I had thrown myself exhausted for hours long without sleeping, without dreaming, without thinking, immersed in a fathomless sea of sorrow, without tears, without sighs or laments. I knew that the hour which hangs over my head, and nevertheless is flying was to take you away from me for ever; I knew that the hour of this fatal day, the second one, was to cause Diana Sforza to disappear from my life, was to remove her for ever from every hope and every desire of mine. But I no longer had either a lover's impetuosity or a breath of will to thrust me towards the majestic basilica, to behold you in your white garments beneath your white veil kneeling before the altar and stretching out your bare hand for the nuptial ring. In my mournful

stupor and all my spent faculties I could only by degrees imagine the mystic scene, by which God Himself in His inscrutable Will was to take you away from me ; and all was confused in the weakness of my exhausted mind. Everything, too, was useless, even my solitary, abject, inconsolable sorrow, useless as well my mad love ; for yesterday in the vestibule of the English Embassy as you passed on the arm of your husband, like a spirit with sightless eyes, without turning to me, wishing with those steps to begin a life boundless and removed from me, without greeting or recognising me, you told me that all was useless for me, love, passion, sorrow, despair. My love, why suffer, why agonise ? I did not go to church to suffer alone, to be tortured alone in order that my life or my sorrow might be consumed.

But a call from above that seemed a voice from heaven, an interior call that seemed to come from a deep voice without words, that now and again caused me to tremble even to the roots of my soul, suddenly shattered my mortal weakness, took me away from the silence and shadows of my deserted room and home and an hour ago pushed me into the street. As one in a dream, but a prey to an invincible

persuasion, I drew near to the big touring car that was halted before the open gates of the *Villa Melville*. The *chauffeur* and a servant were arranging travelling-cases and wraps by an open door, at the other door you were waiting completely wrapped in a roomy travelling-cloak of leaden grey ; on your head was a black velvet toque, tied round with a veil of white Arabian lace. You were alone and waiting, leaning with your hands gloved in white upon your travelling umbrella ; your figure was turned towards me as I advanced. Then you looked long at me, as I looked long at you from a few paces away, and I saw what I shall never forget in my life, that I shall see again at the hour of my death and I shall die peacefully. In your proud, sad eyes two great tears appeared ; they hid your glance that was fixed on me, they welled forth and trickled down your delicate cheeks. You wept, Diana, as you looked at me, so simply, loyally, nobly, not concealing your tears, letting them flow, not drying them but letting them bathe your face. I wanted to throw myself at your feet in the street and kiss the hem of your garment, but your husband, dressed for the journey, joined you from *Villa Melville*, stiffer and colder than ever. You turned your head

and face, when the tears were dried, and departed with him. What does it mean? You wept, Diana, for your youth, your beauty, your exile, your sacrifice—about everything that was dear to you—your country, your family and your love. And only at last when you observed me did the two great tears rise from your heart to your eyes and well forth, as if I only were worthy to see your sorrow, as if I only could understand and pity it, as if I only, afar off, in silence, could weep with you. Diana, I can't forget you. Diana, I can't help loving you, and I shall love you all my life. You wept!

PAOLO RUFFO.

PART TWO

LOVE'S PILGRIM

Rome, 30 June. . . .

CAPRAROLA ! Fifty kilometres divide Rome from that historic castle of the house of Farnese, on the road to Viterbo, where you are passing the first days of your honeymoon, Lady Montagu.

Within one hour by motor-car—flying over the great Roman *Campagna*—I could reach you, look for you, wait for you and perhaps see you—O newly wedded bride. Meanwhile I am stuck here, inactive and fuming as if oceans divided us ; meanwhile I am condemned to a raging solitude here, in which I stretch out my arms to heaven, cursing my lot—alas !—in vain, and I am forced to consume myself with anger, to weep with rage, crying out against you, calling a hundred times your name, *that one of yore*, crying out against that castle that holds you, that confines you—Caprarola ! Caprarola !

How, where, what is this ancient castle whither he has carried you away for a month, or for I know not how many days ?

It has been the abode for three years, has it not, of his friend, the great English painter, Temperley? A house in which Temperley no longer resides, so he has hospitably ceded it to him for a month or—my God!—for how long? Caprarola, fantastic name, terrible name, that leaps to my mind, that springs in my soul and has set fire to my blood with an inextinguishable flame. Caprarola! What is this perhaps gloomy, tragic castle, where someone must have died horribly, where some tender woman must have had her throat cut in ancient times, where some horrible crime must have stained with blood some room, where the cries of the dying must have disturbed for ever the echoes of its princely halls. Caprarola! A name of death for me, as my veins boil with the rush of overheated blood that pulsates at my heart and brain. Caprarola! What is it? Tell me, Lady Montagu, newly wedded bride, what is this strange bridal nest like? What is the bridal chamber like? Cursed for ever be this name, this castle, this room; and cursed for ever be my love and the mad jealousy that tortures my entrails, the mad jealousy that has suddenly unhinged my senses, that tortures my nerves, as I think of you, Lady Montagu, *there*! Cursed be the first man that

implanted a kiss upon the mouth of the first woman, whereby afterwards all humanity was poisoned !

If I were to come there, what would happen ? What could happen ? Perhaps I should be discovered at once by him whom I hate, detest, and curse with all my strength. He knows me. I am sure he knows me. Too often have I spread the toils of my passion around you for him not to know something about it ; too often he has observed me in the road waiting for you that I should be for him a mere passer-by ; too many letters have I written you that he should not have seen one or two, perhaps more, reach your hands. Randolph Montagu knows me. He is English, reserved, diplomatic, proud : he has never given a sign of being aware of me. Moreover, *then* he was betrothed, he had no legal right to recognise me, to confront me, and to thrust me away violently. Now he is a husband and has every right ; he can kill me, he can kill you, although we are not lovers, although you do not love me, although you are pure and I am desperate for your love and dying of jealousy of that old man, of the infamous old man who possesses you, who possesses your youth and your beauty. If I were to come to

Caprarola and I were to meet him in those parts perhaps he would approach me to insult and kill me. If, within an hour, I were to set out in a motor-car and stopped beneath your windows, to provoke this man to killing, to make him believe that there is an understanding between us, that you are a false creature, certainly in his rage he would kill me. What an immense favour Sir Randolph would do me ! But your soul would be hurt by an indelible slander and your bridal robes would be stained with blood. I cannot let myself be killed by Sir Randolph. I must not come to Caprarola, where, dear bride, you are passing the great days of your marriage joy. Are you madly in love ? Ah, how I feel the fever of a crime cloud my eyes with blood and I think if I were to meet you to-day, at this moment, I could kill you, Lady Diana. Kill you, yes ; kill that splendid body of beauty and youth, kill that *he* should possess you no more. Ah, but he alone, he alone, ought to die, the culprit, the thief, the assassin, Sir Randolph ! If he were to die by an accident, if I were to kill him, what joy, what mad joy, Lady Diana, for I should run to take you, to seize you, to marry you, to make you mine, mine, altogether mine, no longer *his*, but *mine, mine*.

Perhaps he might not see me if I came there ? If I learnt to be cautious, if that countryside lent itself—but is there any country round Caprarola ; I don't know ?—to concealment, if first I could contrive to get a letter of mine to you, or some sort of note, to let you know of my secret presence near you ; if I could succeed in this very cunning plan, perhaps I should see you. Diana, I could see you again, I who have been in an agony for four days of love and jealousy. I would see you again, I should quench my thirst at the sight of you, I should assuage this furnace of my blood, I should find some moments of calm, of peace, of ecstacy, Diana, if I were to see you, if a glance of yours, like that last one clouded with tears, were to reach me, that last one that broke in love my heart and my will, so that I turned to love you and adore you because you wept. Suppose I were to come to Caprarola, my only love ? I am dying because you belong to another, Diana. But you do belong to another, and I know not how to send you this letter of mine or any other missive ; you belong to another and I ought not to address letters to you which *he* has the right to intercept and open ; you belong to another and should not even know of my

presence up there or, if you knew of it, you would have to pretend to be ignorant of it ; you belong to another and any appeal of mine should find you deaf, indifferent, silent and motionless. Ah, if I were to come to you to-day at Caprarola I should see no more the little but significant signs by which I formerly knew you that you were aware of my love, I should not hear your voice singing in the night the notes of Gluck and Pergolesi ; no more should I see your figure girt with a black sash, no more should I see your eyes slowly turning to look for me, no longer should I see you weep as on the last day of your liberty. Why come to Caprarola, Lady Montagu ? You are not mine ; you are his. All the forces of earth and heaven, all the wills, divine and human, could not cancel this fact, that causes me to writhe with anger, that causes me to rage with impotent wrath that you are not mine and are his, Lady Montagu !

PAULO.

Rome, 4 July. . . .

Who can give me succour ? My sister Lisa, in the peaceful country of Rieti, does not know of

my adventure, where she is passing the beginning of summer, in the quiet ancestral house, where every year our aunt receives her so sweetly and where together they perform good works, pray and live the peaceful and pious life in which the deep and tender soul of Lisa finds consolation. The dear sister does not know of my adventure: I have concealed everything from her and she only knows that I have returned here for a troublesome and intricate business matter, and that I shall immediately set off again for Switzerland and England; she does not know that I am alone and sick of heart and mind here in Rome. Who can console me? *Villa Star*, close by, the house of my love is all closed—balconies, windows, verandahs, all barred and closed. How many times in these days I have been round it, silently and desperately, and at last yesterday I dared to knock at the gate in *via Boncompagni*. There was no reply, so then I went and knocked at the other side in *via Sallustiana*. A man—a porter—came out of the servant's lodge, which is hidden amongst the trees, to speak to me through the bars of the gate without opening it. Coldly, but with civility, the servant, who is English and speaks Italian, told me that Lady Rosalind

Melville had left directly after the wedding of her goddaughter, and that she is now in England at Mardock Lodge in Worcestershire, and that she will remain there until October. Nothing else. All that is the result of eight or ten of my questions in which I tried to conquer my anxiety and my despair, and disguise my mortal anguish under the easy appearance of an every day enquirer. In vain, in spite of my subtle astuteness—for I have been cute—I tried to learn news of the newly married pair, where they would go after Caprarola, if they would meet Lady Melville in England. The face of the English servant became of stone; I could get no reply from his mouth—"He didn't know . . . he couldn't tell me—he was completely ignorant." So I went away with the quiet, indifferent air of the perfect man of the world, while my heart was gnawed by my agony and my soul fluttered like a dying bird that never dies. Who could comfort me? I went to the house of the Marchioness Pia Sergianni, the fellow countrywoman of Lady Montagu, who used to be of Perugia, and used to be Diana Sforza. The marchioness does not know me, but I had found a means, a form, a pretext, a lie to introduce myself, to speak to her, to know

. . . to get some consolation ! The Marchioness Pia Sergianni had left two days ago for Salsomaggiore for a cure of the waters, and afterwards she would repair to Vallombrosa and would not return to Rome until the end of September. And in the streets of Rome, already fiery hot from the summer sun, dusty, deserted, I am left alone, alone with my agony. It is agony and not pain, and it calls for succour : it is an agony and not a slow, soft pain, something so acutely painful that I ought to be succoured.

Rome, 5 July. . . .

Oh, the power of pain, the wondrous power ! When it had urged me everywhere in Rome that I might obtain news of Lady Montagu and everywhere a bitter disappointment had awaited me, when I was cruelly accusing myself of my cowardice that prevented me from going to Caprarola, to the tragic castle of the Farnese, whither Lady Montagu had been brought by Sir Randolph—with peculiar artistic or poetical taste—for the honeymoon, when violently I was saying to myself that it was better to dare the most terrible ills if only to have the supreme good of seeing Lady Montagu again, my being

obeyed an unknown impulse—certainly foreign to my will—in which I still recognise, and always shall, the mysterious power of love and suffering. My being carried my wandering steps towards the *via Venti Settembre* where at the end, on the right, is the British Embassy. Two or three times, in fact, in two or three days I had wandered in that bright street, that once upon a time used to march with the silent Roman *campagna* and now leads to a new city, and day by day the solitude of the Roman summer increased with my wandering, when this morning, in a flying vanishing vision, a large dusty motor-car passed in front of me and in a second disappeared as it descended towards Rome. As if in a flash of lightning or a fleeting dream I recognised the man who was alone in the car ; I recognised him in his large travelling coat and beneath the peak of his cap. Certainly at my second glance the eyes of my soul, and not my mortal eyes, recognised Sir Randolph Montagu as he appeared and disappeared—alone ! Then I walked on again, composing my face that must have been disturbed by emotion. I lit a cigarette, straightened the flower that was slightly faded in my summer coat, and entered, with a perfectly natural air the courtyard of

the English Embassy. There is there, as at *Villa Star*, a cold but polite porter, as are Englishmen everywhere, so naturally their good servants copy them. The porter did not recognise in the young gentleman of this morning, with his easy manners, the pale and agitated individual, resembling an impudent beggar, who passed two hours between the street and the courtyard on the day of the Sforza-Montagu wedding. My quiet voice asked him if by any chance I could find Sir Randolph Montagu in the chancery upstairs. No, Sir Randolph Montagu had left the Embassy a few minutes ago, where he had come from Caprarola to fetch his mail. Then perhaps Sir Randolph would return to-morrow or the next day. No, he was not returning again. He was going to Caprarola to fetch Lady Montagu and was setting out at once for Switzerland. Hadn't Sir Randolph, then, left an address for his mail? No address: he was going to Switzerland to the mountains, perhaps he would write later on from there. And nothing else could I learn in my burning thirst for news: but when I was outside, I considered that I had learnt everything for looking for, for reaching, for seeing Lady Diana Montagu again.

So I, too, am setting out to-morrow on a

pious, tender, loving pilgrimage. I don't know where I shall go or where I shall stop ; in fact, I don't know if my long search will be compensated by a divine presence. I don't know ; I am setting out—that is all. Although they are leading her away I am setting out to follow her, to follow first her tracks and then trace her. The world is not very large ; I shall find Diana Montagu. And were the world twenty times as large I shall find her all the same. Switzerland is a little country ; one can quickly traverse its lakes and mountains. When I have found Diana Montagu I shall not let her go again, her who wept as she departed and looked at me, who has never answered me, who has never even written to me, who has never even spoken to me, but who wept her two deep, long bitter tears as she looked at me. The world is small and Switzerland is very small ; I shall set out to-morrow. I am getting together all my clothes—very many of them—all that should be necessary for endless travelling, as if I had to wander round the world for many years. I am collecting all my money as much as I have disposable, and I am leaving orders for more to be placed at my disposal later on, when I write if in need of it. I am writing to my Lisa that

I am leaving for Switzerland and that I shall return soon, which is not true ; for I shall not return soon, because I don't know when I shall return and perhaps I shall never return. A sense of high endeavour possesses me now that I am undertaking my pilgrimage of love ; but a dull, clinging presage of death seizes me as well. Shall I return to this dear house of mine so full of my thoughts and dreams and of all my joys and hopes ? Shall I return here where I first loved Diana ? Shall I ever return again to Rome, to our Rome where I heard her sing and saw her weep ? I don't know ; I know nothing. A deep presentiment is in the depths of my heart, and because of it I bid farewell to this house of mine, as if I were leaving it for ever or as if I were going to die. Because of it I am sending from afar all my brotherly tenderness to Lisa Ruffo, to my gentle sister, to the creature of sweetness and piety. I do not know if I shall see her again. The world is small, but my love and my sorrow are greater and stronger than I, and every risk that hangs over my life is nothing to me, and nothing to me is the death that I am going to meet, death that almost took me because of *her* on a night in summer, death that is the companion of every great love. The

world is small and I must join Diana—Diana Sforza, Diana Montagu—never leave her again, live beside her and die beside her, but not before she has loved me, not before she has bowed her face to mine and placed her lips to mine. I wish for nothing else ; a kiss from her mouth, and the supremest ecstasy will have been for me the reward of life and death. I am leaving to-morrow. I am adding these two letters to the others I shall write to her on my pilgrimage until I find her again, and I shall give them all together to her on that day that she may know everything. I am leaving to-morrow : she is waiting for me, I know not when or where, with her beautiful sad face, down which I saw the tears flowing, and because of these tears I am going, that at last she who wept may love me.

Lucerne, 15 July. . . .

HERE before the balcony of my large room, in the street beneath the thick trees that shade so fragrantly the walk beside the lake, some Italian musicians are accompanying, with the musical ardour of which our people are full, a street tenor who is singing "*O Sole Mio* ;" singing with a voluptuous languor and passionate impetuous-

ness that has drawn to the windows and balconies of this *Hôtel National* many of those women who at this hour of the morning have not yet gone out for a jaunt in a canoe on the lake, or to play tennis, or to flirt beneath the trees on the seats encircled by the flowering hedges of the large garden in front of the hotel. The clear lake glistens through the plants. There is a coming and going of men and women dressed in white, who meet and greet each other, smile and chatter, while the wandering tenor invokes his Sun with moving passion, in the old folk-song which seems as if it is expressing the home-sickness of so many people. It is ten days since I came searching from district to district, in this first part of Switzerland, her who calls me to herself without words or voice, without letter or other writing; but everywhere I stopped, in large and small districts, in *Palaces* or small hotels, I found no traces of Lady Montagu. She was not at Brunnen, or at Axenfels or at Engelberg, or at Bürgenstock or at the Righi First. Every shore of the lake of the Four Cantons, every mountain crowned with inns I have visited one by one with utmost patience. I am just now returned from Zurich: she was not there, as she was not at

Gurnigel or Berne. I am here for a couple of days to rest from my physical weariness, to collect myself, to recover my moral energies which the ceaseless search is rather sapping. Everywhere I have been I have only passed a single day, distracted and absorbed in my anxious mission, after tasting a fresh disappointment. The varied landscape, diverse surroundings and summer crowds that Switzerland calls from every country of Europe, and perhaps of the world, told me nothing, because I saw nothing more from the moment that Lady Diana and Sir Randolph Montagu were not in that village or hotel, and were not even expected there. After a vain enquiry I would go into the reading-room and anxiously search the *Journal des Voyageurs* or the *Traveller's Express*, or *l'Alpine Post*, where under their different titles there is a complete list of residents and travellers of the inns of the district and sometimes of the province. After having read this list two or three times minutely, I had no other desire but to leave and go elsewhere. Now I am resting here for two days in this district so bewitching in beauty, grace and poesy, amidst the floral green of its surrounding hills, the majesty of its mountains in the immediate

distance, and the brilliance of its winding lake. Lady Diana Montagu is not here, can't be here, because her husband would not bring her on the honeymoon to Lucerne, full of gay and frivolous people, to the *Hôtel National* where one passes from festivity to festivity. She who calls me is not here, so to-day I am trying to conquer my immense weariness and re-establish my moral strength, because to-morrow I must resume my pilgrimage. They are singing in the street and that is rocking the semi-consciousness of my broken spirit and weakened body. To-morrow I shall be ready to set out, because Diana is not here.

Interlaken, 25 July. . . .

PATIENCE, patience, my heart ! Again ten days of travelling by railway, by funicular, by boat, everywhere, climbing small mountains, ascending lofty mountains, sailing over lakes : ten days of perpetual passage, sleeping every evening in a different district, sometimes resuming my travels on the same day. Nothing, nothing, my heart ; you must have great patience, as had all the saints before they reached Paradise after their martyrdom ; you must endure everything

quietly, in silent heroism until the great reward be given you. To-morrow we shall depart again, my heart : to-night we shall stay here because a violent storm has been continuing for three hours and a black mantle of clouds covers the virgin of the mountains, the majestic and terrible Jungfrau ; so the inns are crammed with a clangorous crowd that being unable to go out throngs the rooms everywhere, singing, dancing, playing, laughing. Outside the prolonged storm closes every prospect. She was in no place visited by me ; she is not here. We shall leave to-morrow, my heart, to proceed further, ever further. Perhaps to-morrow the whirlwind will have passed away and the virgin of the mountains will dominate the valley and we shall greet her for a moment and continue our journey elsewhere ; we don't know where, poor heart of mine that must have divine patience.

Ouchy, 7 August. . . .

It is but a moment ago that I found traces of Diana, of my Morning Star, of my Tower of Ivory. She is a little way off and perhaps to-morrow I shall see her again. I reached here to-day after having explored each bank of the

Lake of Geneva, from Geneva to Evian, from Nyon to Montreux and Territet. To-day I was weighed down by a moral and physical annihilation which every now and then overcomes me in this tiresome search and overwhelms me in a deep, dreamless sleep. This evening, a moment ago, in the reading-room of this *Hôtel Beaurivage* I was falling asleep without a struggle over an interminable list of names in the *Journal des Voyageurs* when suddenly I awoke as I read that three or four days ago, at Montana, Sir Randolph Montagu had won the first prize in the golf competition against Mr. Joseph Chandler. Montana, Montana ! Montana is in the Vallese, above Sierre. It is a meeting-place for summer and winter sports, for tennis and golf. There is a *Montana Palace*. This evening I can't depart ; I shall not be able to sleep because at five o'clock in the morning I shall be able to leave for Vallese, for Montana, where *she* is calling me and waiting for me.

Montana sur Sierre, 8 August. . . .

SHE has been here two weeks, but left two days ago. The English winner of the competition and his lady departed the day after the annual

golf dinner : they are now far away at Scheveningen, near the Hague, on the North Sea. Oh, they know Sir Randolph Montagu well here, because he has been coming here every summer for four years ; and he arrived punctually this summer with his bride, *une superbe Italienne*. So the secretary of the Montana Palace told me, very courtcously. I asked him casually news of the bride : he understood that I was Italian, a relation or friend perhaps. “ *On la voyait très peu . . . probablement elle n’aime pas les sports . . . mais quelle belle personne, Monsieur.*” The country is no longer imposing, is not even pleasing ; and the society is all English sporting folk. Whatever did my beautiful Italian rose do here all alone, my poor Eurydice ? What did Diana Sforza do, while her husband left her up here for days together all alone ?

How far away is the North Sea, and how weighed down is my heart with sadness and inconsolable weeping for you, Diana !

Scheveningen, 12 August. . . .

“THEY have gone away ; they have gone away.” As if they were flying and escaping from me in a fantastic race, as if they knew that

I have been searching for them in vain for five weeks, that I have been pursuing them from country to country, as if she felt at her shoulders my trembling person and my suffering love ; as if, perhaps, she were annoyed and disgusted by my persecution—Lady Diana Montagu, the noble bride on her honeymoon, flying before him who so madly persists in following her and loving her, just because he heard her sing on a spring night in Rome and saw her weep on the day of her marriage !

What has become of me in these days of giddy travelling from train to train, in a hurly burly of my faculties, losing connections, passing mortal hours in some little German station or Belgian village ? What has become of me since yester even when I arrived at the Hague at midnight and it was impossible to reach Scheveningen before this morning ? I don't know. I am here, and she has gone away.

After a charming journey among flowery woods here I am at Scheveningen, a coast for Dutch fisher-folk, here I am at this picturesque, poetical, gay and simple seaside resort that keeps its archaic appearance, in spite of its three or four sumptuous hotels. Its casino is like a family circle with moral exhibitions and

homely amusements. There is no play at Scheveningen either at the casino or in the hotels. If there were the good and virtuous Dutch would desert ; so the foreigners are bored here and go away at once. “ *Ça nous fait beaucoup de tort, Monsieur,*” the manager of the Hôtel Britannia said to me bitterly, where the Montagues had stayed and where they had left after a sojourn of three days—“ *Tout le monde chic nous laisse pour Ostende . . . pour le jeu, Monsieur, pour le jeu.*”

The bride and bridegroom are now at Ostende. I can join them within a few hours. But instead a mortal hesitation seizes me, all my desire to depart and arrive is as it were dead. All my courage has disappeared in an infinite misery of dull doubts, gloomy fears and fatal forebodings. Is it not perhaps better for me to go upon the vast shore with its fine sand, where hundreds of half-naked children are laughing and singing in front of this North Sea that to-day is asleep in its steel-like hue, but to-morrow possibly will be convulsed by gales ? Is it not, perhaps, better for me to stretch myself upon the sand, unknown, alone, silent, and let the hours pass at Scheveningen and never go to Ostende and never find Diana

Sforza and never see her again ? How many men and women have made and are making renunciations ; why is destiny and the world adverse to them ? Why is heaven adverse, as with me, for whom everything is adverse, even the soul of her who loves me not and whom I follow in vain ? Perhaps I could remain all the summer at Scheveningen ; perhaps later on I could go away to one of those Dutch islands in the North Sea, in the direction of Amsterdam, and remain there ignored among the unknown all my life ; and die there unknown because Diana Sforza is a bride ; because she does not love me and flies from me. Because she does not love me and will never love me. In a little island : Zantwort, I think. . . .

Ostende, 15 August. . . .

O rose d'ilection, O Grande Taciturne ! O my Lady of Silence, O you who have never answered me and perhaps never will answer, see, here are one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine letters from him who has always written to you, who has always loved you and only in these letters has been able to open his heart full of you. It is fifty mortal days since I have seen

my star, Diana, shining; but yesterday she flashed again before my blinded eyes. In these fifty days ever thinking of her, ever suffering for her, calling upon her, desiring her, seeking her everywhere, following her everywhere, I have written her these nine letters, into which every tumult of my spirit has passed in feverish and feeble words. Let her read who never answers: and let her see, from the letter written on the day of her religious marriage, on which she wanted to weep as she looked at the unknown one who dared to love her, on which she gave, in exchange for such adoration and sorrow, the precious gift of her tears, from the letter of the surrender of this unfortunate fellow to the outbreak of jealousy to his exile from home and country, to his pilgrimage of love until yesterday and to-day; let her see if the pilgrim be not consumed by an imperishable flame. Let her see if the love of Paolo Ruffo be not stronger than life and death.

Ostende, 19 August. . . .

AN immense pride and an immense sadness render, O Diana, your beauty more penetrating, more moving, more invincible; so that no one

can meet you without being surprised and struck by it. Here where there is a tempestuous feminine crowd, everywhere, on the vast sea-shore and the long promenade, in fashionable meeting-places and in hotel lounges, here where are all the most diverse womanly beauties, the most refined and the simplest, from the exquisite *grande dame* to the *cocotte* redolent with strong perfumes, to the slender, fine and innocent maiden, you, Diana, conquer the eyes and souls of whoever looks at you. I from afar, hidden amidst the crowd, see the glances and hear the words that you, sad and beautiful, and in your pride aloof and far from everyone, do not see and are unaware of. Never did I see you so shut in by your pride and sadness and never were you more beautiful, Diana, as you pass by and know nothing, because you wish to know nothing, because nothing touches your pride and nothing consoles your sadness: you pass by with a beauty that has now become more than ever invincible in its stateliness. You are never alone: ladies and gentlemen of your world surround you every time you appear in public, at the parade, at the shows, at the fêtes; a small court is with you which is not always the same, for around you are other forms of unknown

admirers. Never alone are you, Diana, and yet you are alone and most alone, as never was human creature alone, you who are so fascinating in your twofold compelling mystery of pride and sadness. Cautiously, from a distance, with a hundred subtle precautions, now I follow you, now I precede you, now I withdraw, now I return, ever living in the large magic circle of your presence. Sometimes I contemplate you with all the force of my mortal eyes and the crowd melts before my eyes and I see you as you are, really alone among friends. I see you slowly turn your thoughtful, proud, pure brown eyes searching in the desert that surrounds you, searching and at last finding the glance of *the man* who, aloof, almost hidden, is ever in the wandering horizon of your glance, faithful and immovable in his faith. Just for an instant—a flash of lightning, the two glances, yours and mine, meet. It is everything to me. I shall never know what this moment may be to you. It seems to me that your pride carries you farther off, that your sadness becomes deeper, and that your beauty becomes divine. It seems to: I don't know.

How sumptuous are your costumes, magnificent lady, ever differently costly and ever pre-

serving their character of noble elegance ; and how sparkling and unique are the jewels which you wear. I know them, one by one, your dresses, which are nearly always white garnished with rare lace ; one by one I know your jewels ; from a distance I have seen and noted everything. Nevertheless, magnificent lady, you wear your clothes and jewels as if they were a worldly livery, without vanity, pleasure or joy. Nobody has told me that ; I know it. Few things do I know about you. But this I know that the great rope of pearls that you wear round your neck morning and evening is of no importance to you, and that the costly mantle that you put on yester even at the Wagner Concert is of no concern to you.

Your husband, Sir Randolph Montagu, is nearly always with you in the circle of your friends, but not by your side. For there is no more familiarity between you than at first ; his attitude of glacial courtesy to you is unchanged : you speak very little in low tones. I have seen you also out by yourselves for a walk upon the pier before lunch. In the parallel street behind the hotels I have followed your steps, seeing you again at every cross street ; but you could not see me. You were walking

side by side, with equal step, quiet and silent. Now and again you exchanged a sentence. You went quite a distance and I with you, hidden by the houses of the parallel. You stopped down there on the deserted shore, watching the sea, which was of a leaden grey even in the sunshine : in the distance it was becoming livid. Sir Randolph as he spoke to you pointed out something on the horizon with his ivory-handled cane : you were listening with head a little bowed. What was he telling you ? What was he pointing out ? England ? England where you are going—when ? England where you are to remain—how long ? You returned, walking more slowly. To me, Diana, your face seemed even more serious with a proud sadness. I don't know ; I don't know. At the hotel door Sir Randolph left you with a dry nod, as he withdrew towards the town. Do you love Sir Randolph Montagu, Diana ? And does he love you ? Does he love you ?

Ostende, 21 August. . . .

NEVER was my life more intense, more energetic, and more vehement in every form and expression ; instincts, senses and feelings, in a single

bundle, are urged forward to an incalculable power. Never had a man a more terrible, exhilarating and more fatal secret of life than I to-day, yesterday, to-morrow. Here I am where you, the newly-married pair, are together on your honeymoon, whereas I ought to be a thousand miles away.

Here I am where you two are come to love each other amidst luxury and enjoyments, and I am a third and an intruder in your midst, loving you with an impetuous and clamant passion, whereas I ought neither to adore you nor love you or know you. Here where I can see you many times during the day or evening, where I can always meet you and follow you and draw near to you, almost to touch you. Yet all these opportunities do not satisfy and would not satisfy me, while I ought to—I must—fly from you and avoid you. Here where, in fact, I could easily contrive to be introduced by mutual friends to Sir Randolph Montagu, and I should be the happiest among men, if I could make my bow in your presence, kiss your hand and speak to you . . . yet I must not, I must not. Here, where every hour of my day, and every minute of my hours, is for me the bearer of an immense emotion, of an immense risk

and an immense alarm for you—for you, Diana ! I live a hundred lives all fused together, burning and crackling and steaming, as if my whole being were a pure and incandescent metal boiling in a crucible. But I never consume myself, never diminish ; because you are here, because everywhere around, from the sky that curves over the North Sea to the vast stretches of sand traversed by a thousand of persons, and the street trembling with movement, a divine presence, also hidden and secret, feeds the furnace upon which scorches and seethes my life without being consumed.

O Diana, how much I have lived since I have found you again and seen you again : how much I have lived, even in the restless hours of short repose, with every faculty of mine multiplied and every virtue of mine intensified. Consider well, Diana : I know in what hotel you are living yet I have not been able to go there, in spite of my smarting desire. I never enter there, not even to look up a couple of friends who have the fortune to sojourn there beside you. I have had to choose an unknown hotel not too far away, not too near, where, through prudence, I have not even given my own name ; where they know me as Giorgio

Costa, my mother's name, for she was called Giorgina Costa. There I return, sometimes only late at night, to sleep for a few hours ; sometimes I remain there shut up for a whole day to disappear from the Ostende crowd, a crowd among which we all find each other at the same places and the same resorts. Think, Diana, that in the morning I never know what you and Sir Randolph will be doing during the day, where you will repair, where you will stop, how you will pass the afternoon and evening ; that I can't let myself be observed about your hotel and that, if I see you coming together from afar, I must hide myself. If you are alone, I must forbear the more, I must decide whether to follow you or not. If you enter a place where there are few people I can't enter there with you, but if there are many people, I must penetrate to a place, in such a way that the people themselves hide me and do not prevent me from seeing you, from gazing at you, from being blessed by your face, and I must disappear constantly, so that he may not see me. Think, Diana, that for the seven days I have been here I have always seen you and that your husband has not seen me. He hasn't seen me ! He hasn't seen me ! While I am always

about you, while I am never distant from the halo that surrounds you, from the threshold that you leave, Sir Randolph has not seen me. He knows me well, he would recognise me at once. He would immediately understand the reason of my presence here. How do I know that he doesn't know more about me than I think and about my amorous folly? How do I know that he hasn't seen all my letters and read some of them? Perhaps he knows me and everything. Here he has not yet seen me. It is a miracle, Diana; but, believe me, it is a miracle due to a plan of audacity and caution, of constant suspicion and constant caution, of trust in my lover's luck and distrust of everyone; a plan that every night and every morning I form, create, organise, transform and render perfect, a diabolical plan, O my star of love, an infernal plan—just to be able to love you simply, humbly, deeply, without anyone knowing, without *him* knowing, without you having to suffer for this love. . . .

The evening was already late when my eyes and soul became so gently, so delightfully enraptured with you, Diana. From its hundred windows, from its galleries and little terraces

the *Kursaal*, thronged with people, was flaming upon the obscurity of the night, and every balcony and every window of hotel and restaurant was brilliant. Music lively and soft gradually reached to the streets and the pier, where the visitors were beginning to scatter, attracted by the amusements, shows and pleasures that lights and music were pointing out. The temptations of beauty and gambling were now emptying the great shore of Ostende and restoring to the majestic, austere sea in shadow and night all her nobility. I was going along slowly knowing nothing of you, but never could I wander far from that *Hôtel Continental*. In the obscurity I was contemplating its façade, where the large apartments of the first floor have these broad galleries covered by a rounded roof, those verandahs which are almost little rooms in the open air, where there are placed arm-chairs and little tables and even lamps covered with shades. As is the case in England, Belgium and Holland, in lordly palaces and aristocratic hotels, these airy verandahs denote a poesy, a revelation of intimacy, that causes the passer-by to dream. Yesterday evening I was the passer-by; and you were up there, not too high up and not too

low in the verandah of your apartment in the *Hôtel Continental*. At first you were standing up, amidst a cluster of large-leaved palms, dressed in white, with some blond-lace upon your hair ; afterwards you were seated in an arm-chair near a little table covered by a cloth bright with flowers. The lamp with its transparent shade illuminated softly the lower half of your face and the motionless hands on the chair-arms. Directly in front of you, some one, a man, unrecognisable, was standing and talking to you and you were listening to him intently, replying now and then. I was the passer-by : the shade enveloped me and I was merged in it. No one could perceive me, yet I could see you perfectly upon the verandah, when for the first time you had appeared in your white dress, in the whiteness of your silken lace upon your waving hair ; where for the first time I could gaze upon you for a long time, I who was a shadow of the shadows in the street, almost upon the brown shore ; for I had my shoulders to the deep obscurity of the sea and the moonless night. All my life was gathered within my eyes, and from them there penetrated within me such blessedness that my veins, my feelings, my heart and all my soul melted with sweetness.

I was motionless ; the evening became fresher, more lonely, more silent : no longer was there a wayfarer upon the grand boulevard or upon the pier. I was alone, invisible amidst the nocturnal darkness, alone and not alone, because up there, not very high up, Diana Sforza was prolonging her evening in the open air beneath the veiled light of a lamp. Suddenly he who had been speaking to her disappeared. She was alone. With a slow gesture she turned towards the gloom, as if she knew that someone was down there—he who is always present—where her eyes full of proud sadness seek him. Just this gesture of search for the eternal wanderer, for the pilgrim of love ; a simple gesture, a turning of the eyes, a quiet search, but yet desirous, yes desirous, of this unchangeable, unconquerable fidelity of love in the poor wanderer, in the poor hermit ; yet not poor, he, at that moment, Diana, but rich, richer than Pluto, because that action is *his* and nothing else does he possess : for all the wealth of earth and heaven are his, if the eyes of Diana Sforza seek him in the dense gloom of the starless and moonless night !

Beautiful eyes, good eyes, which are conquering their sadness, and are just sweet and clouded by a serious tenderness—so sees and dreams the

wanderer—that questions the lovely night, gazing into the deep darkness where Paolo is intoxicated with joy, where his ecstasy throbs and surges even more when Diana Sforza rises, so stately in her white dress and stands as if to greet the shadow. Did he see, Diana, a kerchief wave convulsively into the night in sign of greeting, and dissolve the gloom with its whiteness, to tell by that action the emotion and the softness of the hand of the person that was waving it? Yes, Diana, he saw: for a moment her head is bowed as if to say good-bye, then she disappeared. Shortly afterwards a servant came upon the verandah to take in the lamp and the table nick-nacks, then the windows are closed and the curtains drawn. A man left the shade, hesitating, with dazzled eyes, and returned to his unknown inn to weep his tears of joy upon his pillow. . . .

Ostende, 25 August. . . .

O LADY DIANA MONTAGU, mistress of Montagu Castle and Springfield Court, wealthy bride, what do you when night is come and you are alone? Like all beautiful ladies surrounded by luxury you call your maid and tell her to get

you ready for the night : she unlooses your hair from its constructions and braids it : she takes off the boots from your little feet and puts you on slippers of silver cloth : she offers you the steamer to sprinkle your face and neck and hands in a refreshing and fragrant little shower ; at last, standing, your maid waits for your other orders, you who are alone. What will you do then, noble lady, as you are alone ? You dismiss your servant with a glance and are more alone than ever.

Midnight has already struck, you look at the travelling clock that is at the bedside—at your side, dear bride—and you think that it is time to settle down. What do you then, Lady Diana, far away from your family and friends, and your country, you mated to a foreigner in a foreign country, you fated perhaps to a long foreign sojourn, you who are alone in the presence of your God ? You pray, surely you pray at length and much, but with what words, your own or those of the ancient, traditional prayers ? With your own or the usual words what do you say to your Lord in the night, alone and far away as you are ? What do you say to Him ? For what do you thank Him, for what do you recommend yourself to Him ?

You surely recommend yourself, dear lucky bride, to the Lord : you recommend yourself, I suppose, that the Lord may protect and aid and comfort you . . . you recommend yourself, beautiful bride, wealthy and young, *Lady* of England, future ambassadress ! And after having prayed you undress, noble lady, don't you ? And go to bed still in silence, still alone ? I don't suppose : *I know*. Do you read in bed to let the time pass a little ? In case that at last *someone* may return you read patiently, to pass away the time ? Whatever do you read ? A religious book ? A novel ? Who knows what you read ? At a certain point whatever be the book, you shut it up and place it on the night-table, near the clock between the bottle of salts and the *verre d'eau* ? You turn the switch of the lamp and head and body get ready for the night's sleep. You fall asleep alone even until the dawn, in fact until the morning. I don't suppose ; *I know*.

For three nights, Lady Diana, your bridegroom, your husband, Sir Randolph Montagu, and I have been together until the dawn. He doesn't know of my company, but I am not very far away from him and watch with him until the dawn. I saw him for the first time in

the *Cercle privé* of the *Kursaal* three evenings ago, that is to say, three nights ago. I had entered there, introduced by a friend, Don Lodovico Massari, who likes play although he is not a keen gambler. Once upon a time I also played, but with little relish. I found out that I was neither sufficiently poor nor sufficiently rich to be a gambler, so I played no more. We made the round of the majestic saloon and the smaller saloons, where everywhere the play tables for *baccarat*, *poker*, *trente-et-quarente* were surrounded by a triple row of gamblers.

At one of them, a *trente-et-quarante* table, Sir Randolph Montagu was seated, calm, motionless, and intent upon his game, which must have been high. Across the heads I had to look two or three times at him to make sure that it was he. It seemed impossible that the newly-married husband of Diana should be playing cards on that night in that sumptuous gaming-place. Then I thought that it was a question of an hour's game. So I waited patiently elsewhere, now and then returning to that room to spy discreetly—he was always there, calm, absorbed, a cold and precise gambler. He remained there until daybreak. Also I. I had to conceal myself at dawn when he left the

Cercle privé together with the most impassioned, inveterate gamblers. He did not see me. He was distrait, pale and reserved ; pale only through his night vigil, because I was told afterwards that he had won.

For three nights, from midnight onwards, Sir Randolph Montagu has been coming to the gambling-rooms, he takes his place and plays until daybreak for high stakes ; and for three nights I have been rambling round the rooms of the *Cercle privé*, through the reading- and waiting-rooms, watching to see at whatever hour Sir Randolph Montagu would rise from play. At daybreak, always ; with a group of twenty gamblers like him, English, French and Russian. I learnt afterwards that every night from the first since he arrived at Ostende he has been to play and has remained until daybreak ; and the *croupiers* know quite well that he will come right up to the last day. He plays a strong game : he wins and loses, for the most part he is lucky, yet perhaps winning and losing are indifferent to him, for he loves play for play's sake, with the secret ardour, cloaked in composure and silence, of northern souls. *C'est un joueur sérieux* say the *croupiers*, gravely, of the *Cercle privé*. I managed to learn besides at

your hotel, O newly-married pair, that Sir Randolph Montagu on returning at daybreak takes a douche and retires to his room to rest, *his* room that is not even near to yours, and that only at half-past eleven is his servant allowed to knock at the door. . . .

O bride, you sleep alone all the night and you watch alone and you do not see your spouse again until midday ; and he goes to play every night until daybreak. O bride, he has you, you are his, you are a flower of beauty and are his, his ; he wanted you and married you and led you away, but at night he is not with you. He plays, he returns with daylight and sleeps in his own room, as if you did not exist, you his bride, his lady. He has you and does not think of you, does not want you, does not take you. Ah, newly-married bride, Sir Randolph Montagu does not love you : he does not love you !

PAOLO RUFFO.

Ostende, 28 August. . . .

AN hour ago, at the *Cercle privé*, at the *trente-et-quarante* table, surrounded by three rows of players and spectators, who were pressing round the seats of the big gamblers, Sir Randolph

Montagu, who is always very attentive to his game, seldom looks at his neighbours and never raises his eyes to those who are opposite, stopped his game for a moment only, lifted his head, raised his eyes and, and among the three rows of those who are standing, and where I thought I was perfectly hidden standing in the background as I was, noticed me, looked at me and recognised me. His face never changed colour nor did a muscle of his countenance move : only his eyebrows contracted slightly, which I noticed quite well ; yet it seemed to me that there was a slight trembling of the hand, which was absently touching the gold and bank-notes in front of him.

Nothing more : he went on playing. I remained motionless before him, not wishing to withdraw and have the appearance of flying. He sought me no more with his glance. But he had seen and recognised me at first perfectly. I waited silently, trembling at the back of my mind, for half an hour, afterwards I rambled naturally round the rooms two or three times and then left. I had the strength to do this tranquilly with perfect calm. I walked slowly through the rooms, in the vestibule and even in the street that leads to my little, unknown inn,

the *Bellevue*, as if I thought that he could follow me, that he might want to catch me up, and that I must not seem to be in flight before him.

Ah, I do not fly ; I am a man and have no fear of another man. I never have had fear and have risked my life two or three times for far less than this love : I have waged duels with redoubtable adversaries and have run grave dangers in travel and on horseback . . . but, see, this night I am trembling all over with invincible emotion because Sir Randolph Montagu recognised me. I tremble for you, Diana ; I tremble like a child and a mysterious terror for you, Diana, causes my teeth to chatter. I am ashamed of this terror, but I know that it is only for you, Diana, because through me you are suspected by your husband, you the bride, you innocent, you pure. You perhaps are in danger through me, through my folly, you who do not love me and have never loved me, and I am going to cause you loss of peace, I am compromising you, perhaps I am causing you to run some unknown risk ; I don't know what.

Oh, how shall I ever pass the night here, not knowing if he has entered his hotel at once and has awakened you and insulted you because of

me, you who do not know me and will never know me.

What a horrible night ! I trembling, I who am not a craven, I who do not value life, I who would give it a thousand times for you, I trembling like a coward, like a child for you, Diana, the innocent and pure.

PAOLO.

Ostende, 30 August. . . .

FOR forty-eight hours I have not left my room at the *Bellevue*. The little hotel is hidden among the houses of the town far away from the crowded shore and its still more crowded promenade ; my only window looks out upon a deserted lane. Here I am called Giorgio Costa, here no one will look for me, no one will find me. For two days I have not been out : I told the waiter that I did not feel well although I did not require a doctor. They bring the dishes to my room and I scarcely touch them, keeping myself alive on coffee and tea and a few glasses of cognac, stupifying myself with the smoke of a hundred cigarettes, passing from my bed to my arm-chair, sleeping in snatches, snoozing fitfully, trying to read and not under-

standing what I am reading, beginning letters to Diana that I do not continue, because I know not if I shall ever be able to give them to her, because I know nothing, nothing more of her, because even the last letter in which I told her that Sir Randolph Montagu had observed and recognised me is before me, and whenever will she read these very words, this diary of my fear? When? When?

I am here shut up, most hidden, like a criminal, like an assassin, like one who has committed a horrible crime and has fled to a den or cellar to hide himself and every moment expects to be found and taken.

Oh Diana, whatever would it matter if I or Montagu died in a quarrel! With what fury I would fight with him whom I hate and detest. I should like us to be fighting, tearing each other, strangling each other, I and he dying for you.

But that only a threatening cloud may pass across the heaven of your life through me, that a human being can believe you blameworthy through me, that anyone can threaten you, that, Diana, causes me such horror and gives me such fright that I no longer dare go out from here for fear lest he may meet me again, thinking, hoping that he may not have seen and

recognised me the first time, thinking and hoping that he knows nothing of me; hoping, hoping, for you only Diana, that it is all a horrible dream of mine and that you are at peace and nothing has happened. Hoping this, I am here the prisoner of my hope and fear. But perhaps my hope in is vain and my fear for you is just; perhaps you are suffering through me, my lily immaculate. You are suffering through *him* and I am here powerless and craven. I know nothing, I only know that I must remain hidden here, nothing else, how long I know not.

PAOLO.

Ostende, 2 September. . . .

DIANA, my Diana, my poor dear Diana left Ostende five days ago with her husband; she left the day following the night in which he observed and recognised me in the gaming rooms. With cunning that was very simple, and that only came to my mind after four mortal days in prison, in spasmodic agitation of mind and heart, *someone* from my hotel asked news by telephone at the *Continental* of Sir Randolph and Lady Montagu: cunning so

childish that only dawned on me yesterday when I could endure no more, when I had decided to risk everything, to dare everything, to confront everything, only to know the fate of my poor dear creature of love, of Diana—and see, in a moment I learnt that she is no longer here, that she left five days ago with him ! Nothing else. It is news, clear and short, that has suddenly soothed me and liberated my will. I have been a craven to remain a prisoner four days in a mean little room of an hotel ; but a craven for her, a craven to save her, a craven that she might be undisturbed.

She has left. Where, how, why did she leave *the following day* ? Where has she gone ? Where has he taken her ? But, see, I am calm and I am free. I can go out, walk round, set out, travel, and join you at the end of the world, Diana mine ; wherever you are, O creature of my dream and desire, wherever he has taken you, wherever he wishes to keep you, imprisoned, afar off, he the abductor, the gaoler, the assassin, wherever I can meet him and at last confront him, I who have had the scorn and the shame of trembling because of him and of hiding because of him.

PAOLO.

Ostende, 3 September. . . .

SIR RANDOLPH and Lady Montagu left exactly on the 29th of August at noon in a great traveling-car ; they are making a big tour in Holland and perhaps Germany as well. They left no address at the *Continental*, not knowing the inns of their itinerary. Their servants, the valet and the lady's maid, have left for England with the heavy luggage. The departure had been sudden. All this I learnt personally from the mouth of the *portier* of the *Hôtel Continental* and nothing more, because he knew nothing more than he had informed me. Slowly I went from the hotel upon the Promenade and the shore where the people still thronged gaily with happy cries, and especially the children, half naked in their bright-coloured bathing costumes. I seemed to see this spectacle for the first time and it left me indifferent and inert. The North Sea kept its deep leaden colour, a rather pale sun beat upon it without changing its tints ; a great black steamer was vanishing in smoke towards the English coast : inert and flabby I watch all this that was extraneous and indifferent to me. Women still in white and light dresses kept

coming and going rapidly, smiling and laughing, along the sea-shore, tapping the pier with their heels, ladies, girls and *cocottes*. One I think looked at me and perhaps laughed at my weak face and awkward immobility. I remained more than an hour without any energy, without any physical force, no longer knowing what to do, what to think, what to decide, where to go, inert, and so unsuited to live.

PAOLO.

Paris, 15 October. . . .

YESTERDAY the Duchess Spinelli d'Arco made me promise when I left her that I would go to-day to the *Bazar de charité*, where she was selling at one of the stalls for the poor of the Italian Colony. With that beautiful smile of hers, that so rejuvenates her pale mouth and shows her white, faultless teeth, she said to me : " It is for the poor Italians, but there will also be some beautiful Italian ladies." Beneath a lively worldly appearance Maria Spinelli has a very feeling heart, now and then she remembers that she is descended from that noble Neapolitan girl, another Maria Spinelli, who the legend says, became a nun because she

could not, owing to the opposition of her parents, marry him whom she loved, the Pergolesi : now and then the pious and tender legend of her ancestress makes the Duchess of Arco thoughtful. She has understood during my long and very solitary sojourn in Paris that a private and penetrating sorrow was holding me : without asking me anything when I went to visit her, she has tried by goodness and graciousness to distract and console me, never insisting too much, just as if she were soothing with a soft hand a badly scarred wound. I have told Maria Spinelli nothing because the secret that I bear in the depths of my soul, that is wholly my torment but is, as well, all my interior life, does not belong to me. A name is joined to it, and never ought I to declare it to a living person. So nothing have I said because this sorrowful love can only be cured by one living creature, only by her who inspired it, without ever indeed sharing in it. Not even do I ask God for comfort according to the faith of my fathers : He sees and knows my sufferings, but I love the wife of another, I am in mortal sin and to be absolved and pardoned I must no longer love her. I must and will, then, keep my secret to myself : and I have formed of it

and do form of it all my sentimental satisfaction, even if it be composed of tears, absence, and ashes. No one knows anything, no one must know anything. Only those who are fond of me like the Duchess of Spinelli d'Arco strive to take away my deep melancholy with the diversions of the world, if not with the fiery pleasures of this feverish Parisian life. I went, then, to the *Bazar de charité* to pass away an afternoon, to please Maria Spinelli and to seek out, as she graciously said, our beautiful Italian ladies among so many beautiful foreigners. But our Italian ladies were very much the more beautiful. . . . Faustina de Chambrun, who for twenty years in Rome was called Faustina Ottoboni and then, because of her beauty and fascination, the Comte de Chambrun fell madly in love with her—Chambrun, the young sympathetic and brilliant—married her and carried her away to Paris. Faustina in three years has conquered Paris and her society, *cette fleur de jeunesse et de beauté* with her immense, large blue eyes beneath the white forehead and the wave of black hair, with a mouth fresh with rich young blood and a figure perfect in its lines ; of an elegance inimitable in Paris, yes in Paris, Faustina of the heavenly laughter . . . but

amidst the winter of distance and remembrance I see outlined a white face scarcely tinged with pink and two dark eyes, like dark pansies, and a little closed mouth and a proud sadness.

Then another Italian lady, Carla Busca, a noble Lombard, with long eastern eyes, thin face, fair reddish hair, tall stately figure, now full of fire and now mysteriously languid, original, eccentric, perverse was there by the side of the Comtesse de Chambrun—what a charming woman ! . . . But I evoke and there appears before the love-sick eyes of my mind a pure lily-like face, a face composed and noble, and her great silence that nothing interrupts and that renders more invincible such nobility and purity.

And the Duchess of Arco herself so rosy with her delicate complexion of a winter rose beneath her hair white as snow, so exquisite in her touching matureness . . . but I see, yes I see as if she were living, my grand white lily, a flower of purity and of deep spiritual perfume, Diana, Diana !

The Comtesse de Chambrun and Donna Carla Busca were at the same stall selling lace, embroidery, galloon, ceramics, majolica, everything from Italy. A rich crowd surged every-

where throughout the *Bazar de charité* and thronged particularly before the broad stall *des belles italiennes*. I stopped a little to chat with Faustina Ottoboni, remembering her at Rome. She sighs, is silent, then shakes her head and laughs, "*laughs in French*," as she says. I bought something from Donna Carla Busca who always smells of sandal, when a third lady, a girl, coming out from the back of the stall offered me a yellow statue by Signa.

"It is Donna Oliva Sforza, Paolo," Faustina said at once, introducing me: "Vivina, dear, this is Paolo Ruffo, an Italian from Rome, a friend."

Donna Oliva Sforza at once smiled and her charming brunette face, of an aristocratic oval, was illuminated by the smile, while her beautiful black eyes shone beneath the straight eyelashes. She offered me a hand gloved in white—her figure was also dressed in white—and pressed my hand cordially. My scattered wits did not let me speak immediately, but Faustina covered my confusion, as she added:

"Oliva is my guest; only of passage, alas!"

Then she withdrew to carry round on sale her lace from the Abruzzi, her Sicilian embroidery.

I was then able to utter some conventional, cold words.

“Are you not still staying some days in Paris, Signorina Forza ?”

“Oh a very few !” she exclaimed, with lively regret. “I have seen almost nothing here ; I have such a desire to see.”

“Don’t you know Paris ?”

“Oh no !” trilled the singing voice of Vivina Sforza, “I am a very ignorant little person. I never left Perugia until the marriage of my sister, Diana.”

“Ah !” I exclaimed, turning my face away to hide my pallor and my blushes.

“I am going to her now in England,” Vivina added joyfully, “and I shall see London and England and remain a month or two, or perhaps longer, with my beautiful Diana. Do you not know my sister, Signor Ruffo, my big sister ?”

“By sight, from a distance,” I replied, with a catch in my voice.

“Didn’t you meet her in Rome ? If you only knew how beautiful she is ! Now she is married, Signor Ruffo, to an English diplomat, and is Lady Montagu, the beautiful Lady Montagu.”

“And is your big sister happy in her marriage ?” I dared to ask the dear, frank girl.

"Very happy!" exclaimed Vivina, with vivacity and a slight movement of her eyebrows. "What could she desire more? Sir Randolph is perfect with her; a little cold perhaps, but he is English. Do you understand-Signor Ruffo? I repeat he is perfect with Diana."

"You are joining her, then, in England?"

"Yes, at Montagu Castle in Sussex: it is an English county near London. I am very strong now in English geography. My good Diana has been a little alone for two weeks now and mourns for Italy and her family, you know. Montagu, who is looking for a better residence in Vienna, has not returned there, and has asked to remain a little time in London at the Foreign Office. So he passes the week in London and returns to Montagu Castle from Saturday to Monday. Do you know my brother-in-law?"

"A little by sight."

"He is advanced in years," Vivina Sforza suggested, more slowly and a little thoughtfully. "But he carries them with distinction . . . the English are so distinguished."

"Are you so fond of Englishmen? Would you, too, marry one?" I had the audacity to ask this charming girl, with an affectionate accent.

She lowered her eyes, thought a moment, as if surprised, and then answered with a mischievous smile.

“At present nobody wants me, but I should always prefer an Italian.”

“Not so bad !” I exclaimed.

She became silent, looking at me furtively. I bought not only the Signa statue from Oliva Sforza, Diana’s jolly sister, but a mat by Ciociaria and a Sicilian book-cover. She was so pleased ! But I did not dare to speak to her again about anything, I had not even the courage to ask the Comtesse de Chambrun’s permission to visit her, to greet Oliva Sforza before her departure for England. Perhaps the girl expected this request. But I had such, such need of being alone. I took my leave of the beautiful Italian ladies without saying anything more. Donna Oliva Sforza shook my hand a little coldly, repenting perhaps her sudden familiarity. But I wanted to get away, to escape. A little farther off I kissed the hand of the Duchess Spinelli d’Arco, my discreet and tender friend.

“Did you greet Faustina and Carla ? Did you get to know the jolly Vivina Sforza ? She’s a dear, isn’t she ?”

"A dear," I repeated, automatically.

"What a lot of girls there are who could make a man happy," Maria Spinelli suggested thoughtfully, "but the men don't marry them."

"They don't marry them, it is true," I again repeated like an echo.

"Men dream, they dream," murmured Maria Spinelli.

"Yes, they dream," I echoed.

Then I left her, free at last to be alone in the street, alone in the carriage, alone in my room to collect my thoughts and feelings, to gather them round her, for whom for such an infinite incalculable time—six weeks—I have been languishing and suffering in silence and solitude, knowing nothing more of my *good*. And see how my sorrowful vigil, my piercing patience of love have had their reward. Upon my deserted path there has appeared to me the charming Vivina Sforza; her fresh voice and new soul have told me of my Eurydice and alone how I can open the doors of my heart and allow the pain to escape from it and fill it again afresh with a shining hope.

PAOLO.

Paris, 17 October. . . .

IN the foreign land where you dwell, in the solitude by which you are surrounded, may these letters of mine come to interrupt the great silence which you love so much, but which, perhaps, sometimes oppresses and saddens your heart, Diana, star of my night sky ; may they come to bring you word of one absent afar off, of him who on an evening in Ostende, before the great North Sea, in the shadows, was blessed by your white face in the night, and since then has seen you no more—just seven weeks—my star, Diana. There are only four letters ; but how many I have written in the long series of heavy, useless days and, after having kept them two or three days, I have read them again and discouraged and distrustful, profoundly disillusioned by absence and distance, and the want of news of you, I have torn them up. But imagine what intense and secret sorrow was emptied into those letters that the same hand destroyed ; picture to yourself, from these letters in which he tells you all his sad mishap, when he fled cravenly before Sir Randolph Montagu, when he hid himself like a coward so

as not to be found by Sir Randolph, and all to save you from any danger, any insult or suspicion ; his sad lot when he learnt of your sudden departure from Ostende, towards Holland and Germany ; his sad lot when a mortal doubt paralysed all his will when he could not, must not follow you in your wandering journey to little towns where he would have been seen and recognised at once : his sad lot when in mortal uncertainty he came to Paris, to enter a great city of passage, a cosmopolitan city, where perhaps he could learn something ; in fact, to go to a country where he could find a friendly face, a friendly hand and where he could isolate himself amidst the shrill noise of the crowd and the fever of life.

Ah, the bitterness of isolation ! What a daily potion and how he gulped it all in long draughts, six weeks in Paris, having neither comfort from giddy restless, Parisian chits, nor from any loving face, or from the discreet, caressing words of Maria Spinelli—from no one comfort, Diana ! You passed through : perhaps you remained two days, but I didn't know. I never met you . . . until the other day, the sweet messenger, Iris, your sister, Vivina Sforza, young and radiant, like Iris, delicately opened my heart

with the great news. Diana, here are the four letters in which I have told my miserable story, seven weeks without you, my light, my air, my sun, as the Neapolitan song says. Diana, the letter which I am sending you and which I am sure will fall into your hands, because I know the days in which you are alone at Montagu Castle, because I know, everybody has told me so, English husbands do not trouble themselves with their wives' correspondence, are preceding me by very few days. I know where you are, I know how you live : I cannot remain longer here, and the few days I am allowing are not due to my prudence but to my self respect, so as not to meet you unexpectedly.

Diana, I am leaving for London : I am walking towards you, step by step, to join you again, as is my destiny, as is yours. I am leaving for London and afterwards, too, I shall go to Sussex, to Montagu Castle. There I shall see you, there I am coming, and it matters not to me if Sir Randolph Montagu sees me, recognises me, insults me, provokes me and kills me—that is my lot and it is also your lot. Diana, I am coming to you, to see you again ; because you are the essence of my soul, because you are the blood of my heart, and I cannot live without

you, and it is better to die than live without you.

PAOLO.

London, Piccadilly Hotel, 25 October. . . .

DIANA, I am here since yester even ; breathless and anxious, since I left Paris. Scarcely had the boat pulled away from the French coast than my exaltation increased, and I crossed the Channel in the front of the boat that I might recognise the English coast at once amidst the already thick autumn mist. When we touched land at Dover I rushed at once into the train, and remained standing behind the windows of my compartment, watching the English country flying past beneath the waving clouds of mist in the twilight, and my heart was beating to burst in my bosom when I entered London and drove to this hotel in the centre of the colossal city, and entered my room on the fourth floor. It seemed as if I must meet you from moment to moment, greet you, press your hand ; and I trembled. Then slowly a great coldness descended upon the tingling of my blood, a great trembling supervened to scatter my joy. A sense of fresh disappointment invaded me. I

am here. Nothing else. You are in Sussex in a castle ; not far away, but infinitely far away, amidst tall walls that enclose you, amidst the dense trees of a deep park, the dark, gloomy trees of northern countries. But you are a prisoner for all that ! I am here. Nothing more. And to the end of my days I can see you no more, light of my eyes, air of my breathing, my life, my life.

PAOLO.

London, 26 October. . . .

DIANA, Diana, give me a sign ! A sign that I may know you are alive there in Montagu Castle, that you know that I am still alive, that you know that I adore you still, that you have received my last letters from Ostende and Paris, and yesterday the one from London : that I may hope to see you here, I don't know how I don't know when, but that I shall see you : that I may be able to find the propitious day, the propitious hour, the propitious moment in which I may even attempt to see you there at Montagu Castle—a sign, Diana ! A sign !

PAOLO.

London, 27 October. . . .

Is this the sign, Diana ? Is it possible that this is the sign ? Because to-day I met your sister in London, Vivina Sforza, to-day an hour ago, on the right footpath of Regent Street, standing before a jeweller's window. She was accompanied by an old lady, dressed in black with an air of respectability, a governess I think. Astonished and confused I slackened my step, so as not to meet your sister, But she turned round suddenly, recognised me and with her easy frankness, blushing and smiling a little, she shook hands with me, as if it seemed natural to her that I should be in London.

"I am come to London on some commissions," she explained to me at once. "but I am returning to Montagu Castle within an hour."

"Is Montagu Castle beautiful ?" I asked, awkwardly and banally.

"Stupendous ! a true poem !" exclaimed Donna Vivina. "Why don't you come to see us ?" Then she suddenly repented and bit her lip.

"I have to set off again. I haven't the good fortune to know Lady Montagu," I added indifferently.

“ Ah, it is true,” she said without further remark, thoughtfully, unexpectedly.

We said good-bye. But it seemed to me that she blushed again a little. Then she disappeared with the silent governess.

Diana, Diana, is this the sign ? Can this be the sign ?

PAOLO.

London, Piccadilly Hotel, 28 October. . . .

THE elegant stall for fresh flowers, which on the left hand side of the portals of the Piccadilly Hotel, has also a beautiful shop that opens into the vestibule of the hotel, for travellers to provide themselves with flowers, offers to my wondering eyes since I have been here the spectacle of the most delicate and costly flowers, floral marvels gathered into the most charming bouquets, into fine branches surrounded by maiden-hair fern ; and nothing astonishes and charms me more than these magnificent flowers in London, in autumn. These flowers have consoled my secret care, my subtle, persistent anguish ; and to-day, an hour ago, they brought to me the sign, your sign, adored Diana, heavenly Diana ! O mysterious influence, if

love that an hour ago led me upon the covered terrace of the Piccadilly Hotel, where one takes tea, smokes, and watches the incessant throng passing in Piccadilly in the warm afternoons of summer or the tepid ones of autumn. To-day it was cold : but it was a sunny day, a glorious English day, and upon the covered terrace among the round dark trees that rise from large terra-cotta vases, all the little tables along the stone balustrade that gives upon the street were occupied, so quite alone I took one of them at the back, being a little cold, but nevertheless basking in the clear air, the pale blue sky, and the sun of a washed-out yellow. Then across the mass of pedestrians that fluctuate in Piccadilly, across the stream that continually renews of automobiles, motor buses, cabs, I saw a motor-car arrive and you within it, you in your sober dress of deep blue, you wrapped in a large ermine stole with the little ermine toque, you with your face that has become a hundred times more beautiful, a hundred times more fascinating, you with your royal figure that rises with a sovereign gesture, you with your rhythmical, harmonious step, you who walk like no woman walks—you appeared and descended from your car, followed by your dear sister, by your jolly

Vivina, and in descending your dark, large eyes sought, yes sought, if I were upon the terrace, as if you knew or guessed. After such innumerable days our glances met again, met and united, while I felt myself dying from supreme ecstasy. After a moment of hesitation I saw you enter not into the hotel, but into the florist's shop together with Vivina, so charming in her short jacket of black fur beneath the black toque—flowers of youth, your Vivina and you, my proud lady, my magnificent mistress, my magnificent queen ! I crushed that paralysis of my physical forces that nearly always petrifies me in your presence, I rushed down the steps of the hotel, palpitating and trembling, reached the vestibule and stood still at a table, where people wait or write, still with my eyes fixed upon the glass door of the florist's, that gives upon the vestibule of the Piccadilly Hotel. Confusedly I watched your figure, completely robed in dark blue, but enveloped above in white ermine, the shoulders slightly turned towards me, as they bent over the flowers that were strewn about the counter, as if searching and choosing. I trembled, my throat was tightened by a knot of pain, of desire, of hope. The florist's door opened ; in front appeared

Vivina carrying in her arms a great bunch of superb orchids ; further behind you bearing a bunch of roses, white and red roses, wonderful flowers, come from Nice or Cairo, I knew not whence, but wonderful flowers that Vivina held lightly and you pressed to your bosom on the whiteness of the ermine, while the roses caressed your cheek.

Vivina saw me and stopped a moment, her beautiful face mantled with that gentle blush of hers whenever she sees me ; then with a gracious smile she replied to my deep bow. You were further behind, but you looked at me and greeted me with a bow, and for the first time I saw, for a second, a smile fly across your beautiful mouth. Like a gentle flash of light, or the fluttering of a wing, such was the smile, and in the invincible confusion that caused me to melt with sweetness, you were gone out into the street, had jumped into the motor with Vivina and had vanished. I must remember it, and if my soul lives beyond the tomb I shall still remember it—you smiled at me. I prostrate myself and kiss the hem of your garment. You have given me the sign : you have come, you have greeted me, you have smiled at me. I prostrate myself, as if before a goddess, and I

bless the day on which you were born and the hour in which I heard you sing in the spring night, and I bless all my sorrow and all my tears. I prostrate myself, I prostrate myself.

PAOLO RUFFO.

Sherborne, 3 November. . . .

THE little balcony of my room in this neat little inn, the *Rose of York*, is surrounded and almost hidden by the thick verdure of creepers that rise from the inn's flower-garden along the façade, that hide the red colour of the faded bricks and form fresh frames for the windows and balconies. I need not go out upon the balcony, or lean over the old oak balustrade to be able to observe, on my right hand, in the background, high up; neither near nor far, but quite visible to my sharp eyes, Montagu Castle, that rises on a hill, while its park of elms and beeches, of intense green, in part conceals it. Here beneath my eyes Sherborne stretches with its rather old-fashioned streets and its houses of Elizabethan style, but with its industries and agricultural trading in continual movement. The *Rose of York* sees merchants, farmers and commercial travellers coming and going; no one stops very

long, and all discuss business and bargains in the ground-floor room before the great mugs of ale. I have discovered Sherborne, Diana ! It is opposite Montagu Castle, but outside your region and your walks ; for to go to London by car you must pass by opposite roads and to return from London Sir Randolph Montagu must take quite another route. Sherborne station is on a branch line that has no traffic with Montagu Castle, for Montagu Castle has its station at Bordon Camp, on the other side upon the main line. I have discovered Sherborne, I, Diana, your rash, bold lover, who could not be patient a single day after having seen you leave the flower-shop in Piccadilly, where the roses caressed your face and a light smile appeared and disappeared with a gentle flash upon your mouth. Oh, but I have been very prudent, very cunning, in my madness in joining you, Diana, in coming into this green, poetical English country near Montagu Castle. I have had the *finesse* of a police agent, I the mad lover, and I have learnt the habits of Sir Randolph Montagu in London, his hours of work, the bachelor room that he occupies five days in the week at the *Wellington Club*, his old club, and the hour in which he leaves in the afternoon for

Montagu Castle and the hour in which he returns to London on the Monday. I know it all minutely, as if I were a reasonable and calm man and not mad for love of you, Diana Sforza ! I have studied as if I were a geographer or a strategist the map of Sussex, O my love, with what deep attention to enable me to be near my divine lady, to be close to her, to breathe where she breathes, and not be seen and discovered. I passed a whole night in this sharp study, comparing the map, its railways and the names of its villages with the railway guide, a whole night ; and I have found Sherborne here, Sherborne which was to me the ideal village, so I have come to Sherborne and Sherborne holds me. From the threshold of my flowery gallery, sharpening my eyes, I look upon your great windows up above beyond the tops of the elms and beeches, and my glasses draw me nearer to Montagu Castle and to you, creature of my love, as if you were present beside me.

Here at the *Rose of York* they have only asked my name and if I proposed staying some days, with that courteous parsimony in questions thoroughly British, with that parsimony which suits me and my life secret. At Sherborne, as at Ostende, I call myself Giorgio Costa, from

the name of my mother, Giorgina Costa : I said that I was stopping a week. All are coldly polite to me and the servant waits on me with silent solicitude ; and I ask for nothing more. How rash I am, am I not, Diana ? Neither you, dear soul, nor Sir Randolph will come, or ought to come, in these parts. Sherborne exists, but it doesn't consider him. You do not know, and will not know, either the streets of this village, or the *Rose of York*, or the strange and silent Italian traveller who arrived there yester even ; who speaks his very few English words with an exotic accent, and prefers to be silent ; who is neither merchant, nor farmer, nor commercial traveller ; who does not leave the hotel and passes the day in his room. From his little gallery the small bright grey patch of Montagu Castle amidst the trees of its park is to be seen, Rash ! Rash ! because to-day, to-morrow, Fate or opportunity may ruin and destroy my light edifice, because to-day or to-morrow someone will see me : I feel it in the depth of my spirit, but I am here at my look-out watching the walls of your castle, your great windows, and I live on all this, and without it all I should die.

PAOLO RUFFO.

Sherborne, 4 November. . . .

It is Saturday evening, Diana. All the windows of Montagu Castle are illuminated : I observed four on the second story, two on the first. Sir Randolph Montagu has certainly arrived from London some hours ago for his family week-end. He will have brought some friends with him, as he nearly always does. There is a great banquet, then, at your place : and, afterwards, while the men smoke and drink, you and Vivina will play and sing, I imagine, for the young men. O Diana, I am consumed by love, sadness, by desire and jealousy—here alone, alone in the little room of a mean little inn in an obscure English village, gazing despairingly at your resplendent windows with my glasses until my eyes are blinded. I am consumed by love and jealousy, Diana.

PAOLO.

Sherborne, 5 November. . .

THIS morning, Sunday, the maid of the inn, before taking away my coffee-pot and milk-jug, asked me discreetly if I, being an Italian, was a Catholic. Somewhat surprised I answered yes,

then with discreet and simple words she at once added that in the neighbourhood there was a little Catholic church, if I wished to repair to the Sunday functions. I thanked her and said that I would decide later on. A dull agitation tormented me from that moment. A Catholic chapel, not far away, a chapel of mine, of our religion, Diana ! And perhaps you will be going to Mass there with Vivina—Vivina too is a Catholic like you—and you will go without Sir Randolph, who is a Protestant ? What to think, what to believe, what to decide ? Should I be able to see you *alone*, without him, in church ? Should I be able to meet you at the door of the church and give you holy water ? And what would Vivina say ? Could I, perhaps, hide behind a hedge amongst the trees and see you pass on the return ? But will you go ? And will not others accompany you ? I don't know, I know nothing—I can't know—I must torture myself here before this paper, which will only reach you to-morrow ; and time and the beautiful opportunity are flying.

PAOLO.

Sherborne, 5 November. . . .

DIANA, it is evening. I have returned from the Chapel of the Redeemer, where I went in the afternoon guided there by a boy from the inn, Joe, a pleasant and nimble lad. It is an hour's walk from Sherborne, from the *Rose of York*, amidst great beech woods and broad meadows, over which billowed in this twilight hour a soft mist, cold and penetrating. The chapel was open for Sunday vespers : it is at the gates of Barnes and, oddly enough, as you know, there are some Catholic families at Barnes. They were praying in church. Some old women, girls and children were responding to the prayers of the priest at the altar : afterwards they said the rosary. You were not there, Diana, *but you had been there this morning* : I know it. But I had so consumed myself with the desire of seeing you that I could not resist and came to the Chapel of the Redeemer where you heard Mass and prayed this morning, almost to return thanks for your presence, almost to find traces of you, to feel you in the air, to see in the air a little of your influence. I went there on foot and remained there half an hour, I took the holy water where perhaps your finger was

dipped. I knelt in front of the family pew that bears the Barnes coat of arms, where perhaps—who knows!—you too have knelt. I strove to recollect myself, hiding my face in my hands. I tried to pray, but your figure appeared to me with all its grace and your face with all its charm; your eyes, so sad and pure, had been there which looked so gently at me in London, your lovely mouth upon which I saw the smile flit in London—oh I would die of joy and ecstacy for a kiss from that mouth! With bowed head, in the gloom and the cold I returned to Sherborne with the boy who ran merrily in front of me; but I kept seeing those eyes in the evening mist, I kept seeing that mouth before me. Oh, Diana, to die for a kiss! Montagu Castle is resplendent with lights and I am here talking madly about a kiss from you, my lady, my lady who are another's. I talk madly and I know not what will become of me, perhaps of you, through this madness of mine.

PAOLO.

Sherborne, 7 November. . . .

It is night. I have entered my room at the inn, that is fitfully illuminated by a shaded lamp, and

made warm by the good wood fire that burns in the grate. I am trembling with cold and fatigue. I have passed all the evening in the darkness beneath the trees of Montagu Castle, wandering in your park, almost—rash fool that I am—touching the walls of your castle, almost being devoured by your great watch dogs which luckily were chained in their wooden kennels and kept on barking. It is Tuesday, Sir Randolph is in London : I knew that, and for some days I have been planning to go up there, to explore, to arrive even at your dwelling, to touch its threshold and to cross, yes, perhaps even to cross it. I planned so deeply that no other thought have I had for two days except to traverse the big distance that divides Sherborne from Montagu, descending into the valley and climbing up again towards the castle ; except to smuggle into your park, which is not enclosed and marches with the open country, with its rows of trees and hedges easy to jump. I left at five in the afternoon, saying that I was going to Barnes and that I would return late in the evening. It is midnight and I have walked almost continuously for these seven hours, approaching you, wandering round you, ever drawing nearer to you along the great country

roads, deserted and cold in the night, along the broad paths of your vast park, full of shade in the far off parts, here and there illuminated near the castle. Seven hours have I walked, Diana, have I been on foot, not feeling the cold of the night, finding my way miraculously, and arriving almost at your door.

Did you not hear your dogs? Somebody must have heard them baying loudly for a little, then barking for a long time. I withdrew as cautiously as I came: but I did not leave, I remained till late, going hither and thither, not knowing how to get away. One by one the lights of the castle were extinguished, and it became a shadow among the shadows: I left slowly, still turning round in the night to gaze at those walls of stone where you are imprisoned. I walked such a long way to return here. Twice I lost my way in the darkness and I returned dead tired to my little room, so comfortable with its soft light and its warmth. But I have a cold that makes my teeth chatter in spite of the great log I have put on the fire that is burning away. I have such weariness that I cannot rise from this arm-chair to go to bed. Seven hours, Diana, seven hours in the night, in the country, in the park, beneath the castle of

the Montagues, like a beggar, like a thief ! Oh what cold in my bones and in my heart, Diana !

PAOLO.

Sherborne, 8 November. . . .

THAT which I feared with foreboding has happened. This morning at eleven, in Sherborne, as I was leaving the post office where I had gone to post my last letter to you I met your sister, Donna Vivina Sforza. She was in a dog-cart and was driving a lively cob with a groom by her side. I saw her coming from a distance, from the other end of the street, and I stood still incapable of taking a step, much less of re-entering the post office to hide myself. I hoped she would pass by me in the trap with the cob's fast trotting. But instead she stopped before the lace shop near to the post office, threw the reins to the groom and got down at once. Then she saw me. Oh, Diana, her eyes opened wide with the greatest surprise, and her face coloured. Perplexed, confused, I did nothing but bow to her : she returned my bow, perhaps with greater confusion than mine. Diana, why does your sister grow pale and blush when she sees me ? Why am I not indifferent

to her ? Does she know who I am ? Does she know ? Have you told her ? Has she found, has she seen some of my letters ? Has she guessed anything ? Why does she look at me so strangely ? Why does she change colour ? Perhaps she hates me, because I am ensnaring your peace ? Is Vivina an egoist ? Is she treacherous ? Is she stupid ? Pardon me, pardon me, but this morning's meeting has upset me, because I don't know Vivina, I don't know her mind, I can't appreciate her character and her feelings. What will she have thought seeing me in London where she did not expect to meet me ? And here at Sherborne, at Sherborne a little English village *where there is no excuse for me to be*, and only a single reason—love ? What must she have thought ? This morning she controlled herself and went into the lace shop where she remained a little time ; she caught me up in her dog-cart and passed me towards the end of the High Street. She was going more slowly and turned to look at me with a long, scrutinising glance, although she greeted me with a vague nod. What will Vivina do, what will she say about me at Sherborne ? Is she capable of denouncing me and you ? Is Vivina a traitress ?

PAOLO.

Sherborne, 9 November. . . .

DIANA, Diana, why do I never see you, for one week I have been here and you know it ? Why do you remain shut up in your castle and your park, where I dared to enter one night alone and where I would never dare to by day ? Why do you not go out ? why don't you walk ? why don't you wander about in carriage or motor-car ? For two days without a break I have been searching for you on all the roads that surround Montagu Castle, drawing as near as I can. I have been looking for you at Sherborne and at Barnes, and at the stations by which one leaves for London ; I turned to the Chapel of the Redeemer at Barnes but it was shut, because it only opens on Sundays. Where are you ? What are you doing ? Are you alive ? I no longer know if you are a living creature ? I doubt myself, my eyes, my reason, my soul at some moments ; I don't know if you ever existed because I see you no more ! Diana, for six months I have been loving you, writing to you, pursuing you ; for six months ; for six months on your account I no longer have had country, or home, or family. For six months I have been a pilgrim of love, a wanderer of love,

a beggar of love. I am in the depths of an unknown country, forgotten, among folk of another race, of another tongue, of another faith. Yet you have never corresponded with me, have never answered any of my letters, the most ardent or the most humble. You lock yourself up more than ever in your pride and silence, you conceal yourself in your ancestral domain, you hide yourself in pursuits of which I am ignorant ; you fly from me more than ever. Why do I not see you, Diana ; why may I not see you from afar, not even in the most fleeting appearance ? Oh, Diana, Diana, what pride, what indifference, what coldness is in your soul !

PAOLO.

Sherborne, 10 November. . . .

It has been raining in a downpour since dawn. A close cloud of rain encloses this little *Rose of York* and divides it from the other houses of Sherborne. It is cold, it is wet ; the sky is low with great, heavy, dark clouds, from which the rain has been falling, rapidly, densely, beating down with strong and persistent patter for four hours. I am here in my little room where burns continuously my good fire of dry, fragrant wood,

the only comfort of my frozen veins and heart : when I breathe, the breath that issues from my mouth becomes a little cloud of steam. Here within I am the prisoner of the rain, because since this morning I have been trying in vain to discover from the windows of my little balcony that is surrounded with verdure at least the outline of Montagu Castle. But not even the outline, Diana, can I see, for a melancholy and sterile comfort of my desolation on this day of imprisonment. Montagu Castle has vanished from Sussex, from England, from the world : Montagu Castle does not exist. What shall I do with my poor solitary soul, with my poor deserted heart, where my love is a black lake without waves or reflections ? What shall I do to-day, a prisoner with my sorrowing soul, my sorrowing heart, with my love without hope and without further strength to desire anything. What will become of me on this gloomy, dark, cold day in this room, in which the air weighs upon me, and in which I am alone, far from my country, from my family, from my Lisa ? And you, Diana, what are you doing at Montagu Castle, the phantom castle, upon which more heavily lowers the weighty sky of clouds, around which the rain places a magic circle

that encloses it ? How are you living this horrible day, you who like me are of a country where a golden sun shines in a blue sky ? Have you lit an immense fire in the vast stone hearth ? Is the air becoming tepid and almost unbreathable around you ? And what are you doing ? What are you doing for yourself, for whoever is with you, to make pass this horrible day ? Are you thinking, are you reading, do you play music, are you singing ? Perhaps you sing ? Ah, that voice, that sonorous, deep, touching voice, why had I to hear it in Rome ? The voice that called Eurydice, that voice penetrating with ardour, with passion, why had I to hear it when it said that Ninetta was sleeping, that Ninetta was dead ? Ah, if I had never heard you sing, Diana, who have caused me to drink a potent philtre with your voice ! Diana, who art Isolde ; but, at least, Tristan was loved !

PAOLO.

Sherborne, 10 November. . . .

THE countryside and villages awoke this morning in an immense surge of fog. It has not rained since last night, but the clouds are transformed into a sea of fog, into which there rises,

to render it more dense, the smoke and steam of the sodden earth. The air is grey, the light is grey. Not a sound is to be heard ; not a step, not a shadow is to be seen. Yesterday a prisoner of the rain, to-day of the fog. And this they tell me can continue for weeks and months. Diana, I am weary, sad, ill : a keen homesickness pierces me for my country, for those who love me there, from whom I am remote and who know not of my lot. And all my weariness, all my sickness, all my yearning would be healed by the sublime balm of your love, my lady. All my disease of soul and body would be healed if only your divine presence were conceded me. But you do not love me. You do not wish to love me, you cannot love me. You, ever since I have been here in this little English place, wasting with vain desire and useless anxiety, and now consuming myself in a mortal languor, no longer have wished to show yourself to me ; and I am ignorant of the reason, and all is mystery. Oh what a love sickness is that from which I suffer, Diana ; I can no longer bear up without your love and I know not how to live longer without your countenance. I am weary with an invincible weariness ; I am sad with infinite sadness and sick, yes sick, from solitude,

moral misery, your disdain, and your abandonment.
PAOLO.

Sherborne, 11 November. . . .

I AM sending this note to Montagu Castle by hand, through the handy boy of the inn. He will leave the note for you without saying whence it comes. I cannot wait for the post to bring it to you to-morrow. I cannot. I want to beg you to-day on my knees to come to Mass to-morrow, to the Chapel of the Redeemer at Barnes. I conjure you by all your dead, Diana, by all those you love on earth, by our far-off fatherland, by our common country, by what unites us—race, blood, feelings, customs—Diana, come to-morrow morning to church. I can't go on living without seeing you ; I can't. I will hide myself in the elm wood at the edge of the Barnes road : no one shall observe me. I shall see you pass : nothing else, Diana—that I may live. Let me live, Diana ! To-morrow, Diana, in charity to a man who loves you and cannot go on living without the draught of water of your presence—a moment, a moment only.

PAOLO.

Sherborne, 12 November. . . .

You did not come to Mass : Vivina came. When from behind the thick trees where I had hidden myself I saw the trap that she drives arrive and saw her get down alone, leaving the reins to the groom, and enter the church alone, I was no longer discreet and openly entered the church, like a man who has nothing to fear. Vivina was right in front of the chapel, kneeling with her head bowed over her prayer-book. I was right behind, standing, leaning against one of the pillars that support the organ loft. I did not collect myself in prayer and meditation : I heard not a single word of the priest, and his actions seemed slow and tedious to me. I trembled within, from sorrow and anger, yes even with anger, because you had not come to church : I even trembled with impatience for the Mass to finish that I could approach Vivina Sforza and speak to her and question her, no longer knowing how to resist such mystery, such silence and such abandonment. At first she did not see me and she seemed to me to be praying with that true religious piety which is in young souls. She thought herself alone amidst English

of her own religion and throughout the Mass she gave herself to prayer and even for a little time afterwards. She made a large sign of the cross as she genuflected to the altar and went to the door. I was waiting for her at one side on the threshold. She was half in the shade and I could not see her face, but she seemed to me to take a step backwards when she saw me, perhaps from surprise. I bowed to her and stretched out my hand ; for a moment she left her soft, and it seemed to me, slightly trembling hand in mine. Then she smiled with a deal of good nature and happiness, and remained standing beside me.

“English weather, Donna Vivina !” I said, making an effort to smile and talk.

“Horrible ! Horrible !” exclaimed Vivina with a pout, “and to think that it will last, goodness knows, how long.”

“Are you still staying at Montagu Castle ?” I asked politely.

“Yes, another three weeks,” she answered, looking at me a little, “then I am leaving for Italy : my little sister, Anna, and my brothers are alone.”

“To Rome, isn’t it, Donna Vivina ?”

“No, not to Rome,” she exclaimed sadly.

“To Perugia, where our house is—not to Rome alas !”

“Perugia is very beautiful,” I added vaguely.

“Do you know Perugia ?” she asked, with polite curiosity.

“A little.”

“Shall you return there ?” she asked me, hurriedly. Then she repented and blushed and lowered her eyes.

“Certainly I shall return there later on,” I said, still coldly.

“Are you remaining in England ?” she asked timidly.

“No, I am leaving,” I added, without anything else.

“Ah !” she exclaimed, in a low voice, as if she did not dare to ask more.

Seeing that the conversation was languishing, I knew not how to restrain myself.

“Is Lady Montagu well ?”

“My sister says she is well, but she doesn’t seem so to me,” the girl murmured, as if she was speaking to herself, “she won’t confess it, but the climate doesn’t suit her.”

“Why won’t she confess it ?” I insisted.

“So as not to displease her husband, Sir

Randolph, who is very English and naturally adores his own country."

"Does Lady Montagu love her husband very much?" I dared to ask, without repenting of the bold question.

A little thoughtfully but frankly, Vivina replied :

"My sister is a woman of great virtue. I am sure she respects Sir Randolph deeply."

"He deserves it," I said, with clenched teeth.

"Yes. This morning she hasn't come to Mass so as not to annoy him. He leaves her very free in her religion. But here Diana tactfully abstains a little. You understand, Ruffo? In Italy it is another matter."

"And when will Lady Montagu come to Italy?" I asked, insistingly.

"Who knows?" murmured Vivina, still more thoughtfully. Everyone had left the little church by different roads: the grassy square was deserted. We remained alone, Vivina and I, with the groom who was holding the cob which was pawing the ground. Suddenly Vivina said to me, as if she could no longer restrain herself :

"I should so much have liked to introduce you, Ruffo, to my sister—to give you good

acquaintance. I haven't been able to. What a pity ! ”

“ Another time,” I murmured in a low voice.

“ Let us hope in Italy. We shall see each other again in Italy, in our own country, shall we not ? ” she asked, with sincere concern, pressing my hand and getting ready to go.

“ In Italy certainly,” I replied, with firmer accent. She jumped briskly into the trap. Before leaving, smiling delightfully at me, she threw me a rose-bud which she was wearing in her jacket, and whipping up the cob, exclaimed “ Souvenir from an Italian ! ”

.

Diana, woman of great virtue ; Diana who will not know me ; Diana, who has no pity on me ; Diana, who respects Sir Randolph deeply and hence disdains my love, I am thinking of leaving. To-morrow morning I shall not go away, so as not to meet your husband who returns to London. I shall leave to-morrow evening. I feel very weak in physical force because, perhaps like you, this climate does not suit me : but my will is strong and firm. I am going away. I shall be in London at midnight to-morrow. Afterwards I know not. Perhaps I shall need rest, because these heavy, hateful

days in Sussex have exhausted me. At times I feel a giddiness. I have lived badly for nine days. Above all I have not seen you. Above all, you do not love me. Above all you will not love me. Your virtue is so lofty that it denies love and life. O noble lady, I am leaving to-morrow evening. Good-bye.

PAOLO RUFFO.

London, Piccadilly Hotel, 15 November. . . .

DIANA, I am here, in despair at being left, in despair at being separated from you. I adore you.

PAOLO.

London, Piccadilly Hotel, 16 November. . . .

I AM ill. I believe I am very ill, Diana. I can't keep on my feet, my hand scarcely holds the pen. I ask God for strength to let me descend into the street to post this letter, the last perhaps, with my own hands. Afterwards I shall go back to bed because I am so ill. Good-bye, Diana.

PAOLO.



PART THREE

THE LEAF OF GOLD



Nice, 20 February. . . .

A LITTLE bunch of Parma violets described a graceful curve and fell upon my breast near the heart. I gathered it fresh, wet, full of scent as it was, and immersed my face in it for an instant: that sufficed for the carriage from which it was thrown, decorated with dark and pale violas and great bunches of white lilies erect upon their stalks, to draw further away in the continual movement of the equipages. That sufficed for me just to perceive a lady's hand gloved in white, protruding from a light white mantilla, throw me the little bunch of bright fragrant violets, and just a fleeting glance of two dark eyes like pansies, of two proud, sad eyes meeting and uniting in a flash with mine. The carriage drew further away, another decorated with rich red geraniums passed full of smiling girls who pelted me with roses; the roses fell at my feet and I did not pick them up. I ought to have moved or walked or run along the footpath of the *Promenade des Anglais*, upon which there thronged, among scattered

seats and little tribunes, other ladies throwing flowers, to catch up the carriage that was all decorated with dark and light violas and from which afar off I still saw the tall white lilies waving.

Instead I remained fixed where I was for an hour near the gate of the little palm garden in front of my *West End hotel* where I had been intoxicating myself with the perfume of the flowers that had been thrown amongst carriages and pedestrians, tribunes and boxes in that battle of flowers. I was alone, without friends or companions or flowers, in front of my hotel : a solitary and simple spectator of that pleasant, happy battle of flowers, quietly enjoying in silence its beauty and gaiety.

Some flowers had fallen at my feet, into my hands, thrown by gracious ladies passing in carriages all covered by flowers, or passing on foot ; and sometimes I replied by throwing back flowers to some unknown lady who was flying away. But the little bunch of Parma violets was thrown deliberately, time and distance being judged, by her whom, in her white dress and mantilla I must have seen long ago, who knows when. It reached me like a message, and so at once I gathered it and my face breathed in its

freshness and its fragrance. The carriage of violets vanished in a second with the lady dressed in white ; her flowers nestled against my face, tempered its glow, and again flashed upon me a well known, loved, adored glance that I should have recognised among a thousand.

A sad, strange recollection, a strange mysterious coincidence held me motionless in my solitude amongst the glittering throng of the battle of flowers. In the mortal hours of torpor passed by me in that nursing home in Bedford Street, London, where I was for about two months, and for a month between life and death ; in that heavy stupor filled with a long dream, that perhaps was nothing but a long delirium, I saw a lady dressed in white hover two or three times like a ghost near my bed in my clean, white little room. That lady was not Nancy, my silent, zealous nurse, always dressed in white, who nursed me so lovingly and who, it may be said, snatched me away from death. It was not my poor dear Lisa who had only learnt of my illness, the country where I was sojourning and my address, after a month, when I was already out of danger. She had rushed to me and was always with me until I left my bed, and the nursing home

in Bedford Street and England with her for Italy.

Not Nancy and not Lisa, the lady dressed in white. In some moments of reason I asked my nurse if anyone had come into my room, but Nancy shook her head in denial without speaking. Also Lisa said no, with a shrug of the shoulders when later, much later, I asked her if someone had been to see me. But, then, why did I twice find in a glass vase near my bed a bunch of Parma violets? The first time, perhaps, in my high fever I was raving and I really seemed to see in an hallucination the tender violas of a delicate yellow that was almost white, and to breathe their fresh smell—but the second time?

The second time I saw them with my mortal eyes, without fever, without dreams. Nancy and Lisa made no reply. Parma violets, the same as of to-day!

After three days of high fever the manager of the *Piccadilly Hotel*, fearing that I was going to die there, rushed to the Italian consulate. Giacomo Spinola, the vice-consul, had suspected something peculiar, and probably understood that Giorgio Costa could not be my true name. He took the trouble to come to the *Piccadilly*

Hotel and recognised me on my bed of pain, where I lay prostrate and suffocating with double pneumonia. Immediately he saw to all that was necessary, doctors, nurses, helping himself like a brother. I remember nothing : I was delirious for thirty or forty days. As soon as he could, because of the continual protests of the manager, Giacomo Spinola had me removed to the nursing home in Bedford Street ; but even there, from pneumonia and pleurisy, I remained almost until Christmas between life and death. I caught the illness at Sherborne, in the night of fog and cold and damp I passed in the park at Montagu Castle. Lisa did not reach me for a month ; Giacomo Spinola knew nothing of my family and had to write twice to Italy. Lisa was looked for everywhere and at last was discovered at Rieti at our aunt's, where she was just leaving in secret fear and anxiety. She rushed to me : she cared for me tenderly, and together with Nancy she saved me. She asked me nothing : I told her nothing. Melancholy but serene she took me away to Italy about the middle of January ; I faint, pale, and very weak in my convalescence. My good nurse was all in white, in the white apron that covered her grey dress : my sister was

dressed in white at my bedside. But the *other*, the *third* whom I fancied I twice observed? Was the *other* perhaps the dream of my fever and my poor love? I know not. The second time, I saw, I touched, I smelled the Parma violets. Lisa is at Rome where she is waiting for me until I have spent, perhaps, two months here, to recover completely. I am breathing better now: my blood flows better in my cold veins, and I have more desire of living than I had a fortnight ago when I arrived here, still worn out and exhausted. When the sun sets I am still seized by a cold shivering; but it is not fever. Everyone is cold at Nice when the sun sets: it is so warm when it shines upon the Bay of Angels.

The carriage decorated with dark and light violets has not appeared again: the lady has not appeared again. Now that it is evening I am pressing the flowers to my bosom, now that I am in my room, well shut up and warmed by a good wood fire. These violets do exist and a lady threw them at me on purpose—and those eyes, those eyes!

PAOLO.

Nice, 22 February. . . .

I HAVE returned from the *redoute blanche et mauve*, the great ball, the famous ball of the famous Nice carnival. The colour of this *redoute* changes every year and every man and woman who wishes to go to it must dress and mask in those colours. It is an immense tumultuous crowd with an expansive and sometimes forced gaiety, but like a picture impressive with its two continual equal tints, white and lilac, lilac and white, trimmed and placed and joined in a thousand shapes, for the most part curiously but sometimes prettily. An immense crowd, din and tumult : I did not wish to go there. I am completing my convalescence here and already my life begins to flower again, and I feel health sprouting within me and even a second youth. I did not wish to go : I ought to finish my cure and I was forbidden to stay up late at night, to live in surroundings too laden with human breath and perfumes, in surroundings artificially warmed. For a fortnight I have wisely gone to bed at ten every evening in my little room at the *West End Hotel*, resisting my friends in Nice who wished to have

me with them every evening at Monte Carlo, at Beaulieu, at entertainments and theatres.

A fortnight of almost monastic life, and then the day before yesterday the little bunch of Parma violets, like the one in London, and for two days I have been looking throughout Nice for the lady's hand that threw it. I went to the *redoute blanche et mauve*.

There were hundreds of masked women in domino and mantilla, in curious white and lilac dresses, hundreds of little women, of tall and handsome women, some sumptuously garbed, others scarcely decent, many vulgarly dressed ; but some of them were exquisitely robed, in luxury and elegance, and constantly followed by a court of men. Others were so cunningly wrapped in white dominoes as to appear half nude with masked faces, embraced by men burning with desire, bold and brutal. There was an occasional modest figure, in her large white shapeless mantilla. Such a one was alone in a box on the first tier, then two other dominoes joined her, remained with her a little and went away ; she was alone again and got up to watch the ball attentively through her mask of palest lilac, almost grey pearl. Around her person there billowed a rich mauve domino, with

flowing sleeves closed at the wrists, with a great hood raised above her head, all of white lace. Upon her breast she had a big bunch of fresh Parma violets, tied with a bow of white silk. The colour of the dress was not visible, the hands were gloved and half hidden; the lace of the hood hid both forehead and neck. The figure was so modest and so lovely. With difficulty I crossed through the suffocating crowd that was whirling in the immense hall, I approached the little box that was very low and said to her in a jesting tone :

“ Good evening, Parma Violet.”

It seemed to me as if she started and drew back for a moment : it seemed so, but I am not certain. Then, turning my shoulders to the hall, I raised my mask of white silk and looking at her said trembling, yes trembling :

“ Are you she of the day before yesterday ? She who was in front of the *West End* ? Your little bunch has lived with me for two days.”

She answered not a word ; but I saw—I am sure of it—that she turned towards me, that she listened to me with head a little bowed. A rush of warm blood surged to my heart and temples.

“Are you she of London? When I was ill, when I was dying? Are you she?”

An impulse, a fury of love shook me. I raised myself on tip-toe and dared to press and touch the gloved hand that was resting on the front of the box: I dared to pronounce the fatal name.

“Diana, Diana, I love you: I love you always.”

She answered not. But for a moment her hand remained in mine, then she withdrew it slowly. Slowly she got up, looking at me through her mask and retired to the back of the box, where I could no longer see her.

Like a madman, through a thousand obstacles, a thousand shocks, a thousand incivilities, I ran towards the corridor of the first tier, seeking for the box of my Parma Violet.

The unknown was at the door with four other maskers, two men and two women. It was impossible to approach her. Three or four times I went up and down that corridor: the group did not stir. They were talking among themselves, in fact, they were laughing though subduedly. I listened; they were talking in English. After a few minutes they moved and rapidly mixed with the crowd in the corridor

and vestibule; they were lost to sight and escaped me. I wandered round madly, in the theatre, outside in the neighbourhood, without mask : I re-entered three or four times. Finally I met Dario Morea with Francesco Farnese and two little women, one of whom was *la grande Chérie*, the thoughtful, languishing, melancholy *Chérie*. They wanted me to come to supper with them : I refused, confused and bewildered. Then *Chérie* suggested with her veiled, insinuating voice :

“ Are you in love with Lilette Fleury, Ruffo ? ”

“ I ? Lilette ? Whatever are you saying ? ”

“ A little while ago you were talking to her and held her hand.”

“ Was it Lilette ? How do you know ? Who told you, *Chérie*.”

“ That was her box, and I saw her domino to-day at her place,” *Chérie* added vaguely.

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I can't sleep, I can't rest. My blood is on fire with love.

PAOLO RUFFO.

Nice, 23 February. . . .

You are here, Diana, I know it, I have felt it : I always know where you are. God leads me

to you, you who are my lady, who were and are destined for me. Diana, I have seen you here during my walk. Diana who should love me, Diana mine ! Together with the Parma violets that I am sending you, with my two letters, as well as this one, here is my heart, here is my soul, here is my person ; at your feet, desirous of your love, of all your love, Diana mine.

PAOLO RUFFO.

Nice, 23 February. . . .

It is night : I must write to tell you that I am burning with love for you, beautiful Diana, my Diana ! I burn as if I were twenty, in fact I am twenty, because my terrible illness has renewed my whole life, because my convalescence and cure are a resurrection of my forces, of my first youth, of whatever is freshest and most ardent in a man or youth. How beautiful you were yesterday morning when I encountered you at the door of the *Hôtel Ruhl*, among a group of friends, and almost with a leap I was urged towards you as if to take and seize you ; but you understood and drew back a step, growing pale and then blushing, and finally avoiding my

glance which too publicly showed my love. I am burning with passion for you, Diana, whom I have not seen for three months, whom I have always loved even in my delirium, even in my agony ; I am burning and you ought to be scorched by my flame because you are my lady, because heaven has sent you to me, and no earthly power, no earthly tie, can take you away from me. Diana, it was you, wasn't it, who threw the little bunch of flowers upon my breast, on the day of the battle of flowers ? Diana, it was you the other evening in that box at the *redoute* in the large mauve domino, with the Parma violets in your bosom ; it was you with whom I spoke while you listened to me silently but kindly ? It was you whose hand I took, you and not Lilette Fleury, you, wasn't it ? You, who ought to love me, you, adored Diana ?

PAOLO.

Nice, 24 February. . . .

SIR RANDOLPH MONTAGU is with you at Nice ; Lady Rosalind Melville is at Monte Carlo because she is very fond of play, even at her age, and yesterday she came from Monte Carlo to spend the day with you. With you there is

a little company of friends, English, French, Italian. You are a set, a jolly set, that is always together at routs and excursions, at dinners and entertainments ; you are surrounded and taken by all of them as if behind a fortification. And what do I care about them all ? I care nothing for Sir Randolph Montagu who has taken my lady, who ought to restore her to me : I ought to have her and will have her. I care nothing for Lady Melville who has married you to a foreigner, to an old man, and has taken away from you the only great good that life has, which is love. Nothing, nothing do I care for them all, who are strangers to you and strangers to me. That Russian who pays court to you and that Italian, whom I do not know, but whose name I know, Guido Motta Visconti, the handsome Guido Motta ? They do pay court to you, don't they ? They are always by your side, the one on the right, the other on the left.

But it matters nothing to me, it ought not to matter, because you are my Diana, mine, exclusively mine, solely mine, and it is my love that ought to take you completely, ought to give you to me, Diana, who alone deserves you, because I have loved you especially above everything, above everybody, because I alone

love you who am for you intense deep love that offers you life, that desires you above everything, that consumes yet exalts—and they, husband, godmother, friends, courtiers, are a nothing of nothingness. I laugh at them, I am ready to confront them all, because I am *Love* that surmounts, and conquers all !

PAOLO RUFFO.

Nice, 25 February. . . .

THE handkerchief of cambric and lace which you lost an hour ago, at the grand ball of the *Cercle de la Méditerranée* is here in my left hand, pressed to my face and lips. It has *your* perfume and something of you, and I am inhaling this handkerchief and kissing it, as I write to you with trembling hand and mind, after having followed you closely the whole night; everywhere you set foot, like your shadow, heedless of everything and everybody. Ye gods ! How magnificent was your beauty to-night in that soft dress of light blue velvet, trimmed with silver thread, with the light blue tulle at the bosom, and your extraordinary necklace of pale turquoises and diamonds at the neck, and the tiara of diamonds on your

queenly head ! Ye Gods ! How regal with every beauty, every grace, with every alluring feminine expression you were to-night, Diana, lady mine ! A very remarkable night in which my soul passed through impressions, both painful and ecstatic, and even the painful ones were ecstatic. I still shake and tremble here over these cold words and this cold paper that cannot tell you how much I loved you to-night, how I rejoiced in your divine presence and divine beauty, how I suffered through all that happened. Ah, Diana, Diana, with what assiduous care you constantly lifted your eyes away from me every time—a hundred times, a thousand times—I sought your glance. How your eyes would be elsewhere, always thoughtful, distrait, afar off, but expressly not to meet my glance !

Never have you so much avoided this meeting of the glances, which, since the day on which I began to love you, has been the only sign that you recognise me, that you know of my dedication and mortal sorrow. Never have you been so distant to me, Diana, as to-night, purposely, designedly ; always looking another way and keeping your eyes lowered, in sign of pride, of sadness and annoyance. In vain I kept placing myself in your way, in vain I went to meet you

as you walked, in vain I seated myself opposite you when the *cotillon* was danced. You would not see me, you would not look at me. Cold, proud, with an expressionless, almost marble, face you danced with dignity. As you passed by me in the long whirls of the dance your austere face, with a natural action, would be turned where I was not. I suffered a thousand deaths, Diana. But at a certain point you had withdrawn with your cavalier, with that hateful Guido Motta Visconti, to a corner of the room. A clump of palms was hiding you, or you thought it was hiding you, from my eyes; Guido Motta Visconti was talking to you in a low voice, but you were not listening to him. I saw you quite well. Supposing yourself to be hidden, you turned to my part of the room and looked at me a long time, when you were certain that I could not observe you. Diana, what are the thousand deaths I suffered to that minute of ecstasy? Secretly you sought me out, you looked long at me for a minute—an age to me! Afterwards, immediately afterwards, when, bewitched and intoxicated, I joined you, I again found your statuesque face, your closed and smileless mouth.

Diana, Diana, I hovered around you all the

night, as if I were your shadow ; but I was never able to approach you, so guarded and surrounded were you. Sir Randolph Montagu, indifferent and cold, gambled all the night far away from you : all the night your set surrounded you, Motta Visconti, de Flers, and Wolkoff were the three that dogged you most. They never left you, while Princess Tchenicheff, the Comtesse de Rougé and Donna Camilla Bolgheri now and then returned to form a court with you and their cavaliers. I was a soul in torture beside you, but jealousy more than grief burnt within me, a proud, gloomy jealousy of those men who were keeping and separating you, who were hindering anyone from approaching you. That Motta Visconti understood quite well, twice he looked at me with a scowl, the *bellâtre* ; and Wolkoff laughed at me. For a very little I would have fallen upon him, to thrash him in the middle of the ball, Diana.

Oh, what savage rage, Diana, at some moments, when you passed in the dance before me clasped by the arm of one of *them*, and as you almost brushed me with the little blue train of your dress and then suddenly vanished, beautiful as you never were so beautiful, while I was gnawing myself with love and jealousy and mad

anger. Then your handkerchief gently escaped from your closed hand as you passed by me : you let it fall to the ground without picking it up or letting it be picked up, draitly and absently, while I stooped to seize it cautiously like a thief, and like a lover I at once hid it in my coat near my heart.

Your handkerchief has been like unto that of the pious Veronica, that dried Christ's face wet with sweat and blood. It has pacified my fury, has silenced my jealousy and, pressed to my face and lips, has brought freshness, peace and hope. What hope ? What hope ? Diana, you would not see me or look at me this evening : Diana, you continually danced and talked with other men—but did the handkerchief fall on purpose or did you lose it ? O Diana, I am suffering and rejoicing and trembling with doubt and passion as I write to you in the dawn.

PAOLO RUFFO.

Nice, 26 February. . . .

WITH deep emotion this morning again I saw my lady of other times, I saw again my Eurydice, when, evoked and attracted by the influence of my love, you appeared alone at the

door of the *Hôtel Ruhl*—yes alone ! With slow but light steps you did not proceed along the footpath of the too fashionable *Promenade des Anglais* but outside, across the road, beyond the path of little trees, upon the fine, soft, velvety sand, where there walk about slowly, or stand still in the sun, not frivolous worldlings but quiet old men, graceful convalescent ladies, pale girls, sleeping babies in their little carriages watched over by their nurses. There was not a thread in your dress and your hat which was not white, even the little feet were booted in white leather with buttons of mother of pearl. Only your parasol was red, like the red of a red rose. When you turned beneath the little trees to reach the shore you perceived me a little way off, standing near the newspaper kiosk : you bowed your head a little and opened your parasol, which cast a rosy shadow upon your face that is so white.

Ah Diana, you were like her of once upon a time this morning, solitary, full of silent pride, thoughtful, distant from all ; and your face was pure as once upon a time in Rome when you were Diana Sforza, in your simple girl's dress, proud and poor ; and your eyes were of the darkest violet as once upon a time, and a deep

secret was within you that no one will ever know, the secret of once upon a time, but more mysterious and deeper. With slightly tired step you walked at the water's edge, and the quiet waves almost licked your little white shoes. You walked on a distance, and hidden amongst the two rows of little trees along the promenade, he accompanied you who is yours. You closed your parasol and let the sun warm your face and body, as if you were cold. I think you are always cold, like me you still feel in your bones and nerves the cold and damp of England, like me here, who now and then in such brilliant sunshine, in such warm air, still shiver from it—but I ought to have died from it *then*, my love, You closed your eyes as you walked in the sun, as if a sweet drowsiness were stealing over you, as if you were dreaming of some exquisite joy ; and I, as if I were your shadow, was penetrated by sweetness through you ; through you I was dissolved in sweetness, through my Eurydice, through my lady who sang so passionately for me, only for me, in the great Roman night.

You vanished as in a mist : but I am dying of sweetness through you.

PAOLO.

Nice, 26 February. . . .

BUT why did you do this horrid thing this evening, Lady Montagu, why did you go with your set to that low little theatre, filled with a doubtful international crowd and *cocottes*, to see and hear a piece, indecent in persons, in words, and in gestures; and why did you remain with all your lot, Sir Randolph Montagu, Guido Motta Visconti, de Flers and Wolkoff, with those degenerates—even your husband is a degenerate, especially your husband, who took you there—with the Princess Tchenicheff, with that mad woman Comtesse de Rougé, while Donna Camilla Bolgheri contrived to dress as a man—degenerates! degenerates! And you in the midst of them, you the tower of ivory, you the mystical rose, you white in face and soul like the lily of the valley, you, dressed in black shining sequins that reflected like mirrors, with bosom scarcely hidden by black chiffon and a large red rose, and wearing a bright toque with a white aigrette, were in that horrible theatre, in that box full of bad people, with men who crowded around you, while on the stage actors and actresses, singing, declaiming and dancing,

were presenting a spectacle of wickedness. Yet you did not shudder or rise to fly in your disgust, you felt no offence to your modesty, to your delicacy, to your purity, as wife and woman. You remained there, as if spellbound, looking, listening, smiling, yes even smiling, as I have never seen you smile ; smiling at the play, smiling at those who bent over your naked shoulders to speak to you, much too close to you. How terrible ! And how I choked with indignation and felt my repressed rage breaking out against everybody and everything, in that place of corruption and infamy, where I had entered by chance, after looking for you in all the meeting-places of Nice but without finding you, yet never thinking that you would have exposed your good name and beauty in that society of corrupt, foolish, vicious people—you the pure creature who this morning were wrapped in pride and silence, living in a distant and superior world, you who were Diana Sforza, my dream of virtue, and who are now Lady Montagu. To dishonour yourself in that company, in that theatre, scantily dressed like *the other women* and smiling like *the others* ! How mortally I hate this place and its surroundings, and the people among whom you live ; how I

hate your cold husband who is the most cynical of cynics, how mortally I hate you, yes, you, *Lady Montagu*, who this evening have betrayed my dream and my love. PAOLO RUFFO.

Nice, 27 February. . . .

DON'T you understand, *Lady Montagu*, that my heart and jealousy have reached exasperation ; don't you see, don't you feel, that I can no longer restrain myself, and that at any moment a horrible scandal may break out ? If again I see you as last night, in those surroundings that cause me to shudder, in familiar touch with people whom I despise, if again, as to-day, an hour ago, I see you climb the break with all your set, to sit beside Motta Visconti, who was driving the four horses. Your husband was not with you, and you were wearing a charming purple cloak with silver lace and were quite intent upon your flirt, that miserable Motta Visconti. And you were not aware—or didn't want to be—that I was there in the street, like a beggar, or an imbecile, to watch the break start for Cannes. If that happens again, or anything similar, Diana, I do not answer for myself. PAOLO.

Cap Martin, 1 March. . . .

I CAME two days ago to ask from this great dark and fragrant wood that slopes and descends to the sea and almost places its roots among the rocks battered by the water, refreshment for my renewed and boiling blood, silence and solitude for my nerves exasperated by anger, shade and peace for my heart vibrating under the impulse of a passion that has reached its limit.

Already the ancient trees and tranquil waves, softly crowned with white, have spoken to me everything has spoken to me, the air, the shade, the silence and the solitude. If I had remained yet a few hours in Nice, my lady, I should have committed homicide and stained my love with blood. I have fled so as not to kill someone, I don't know whom, someone : and now I believe and hope that the red madness has passed and vanished from my instincts and desires. My lady, the trees of the brown forest and their strong aroma and silent shade, and the tender, equal light have told me that I am wrong : the little waves down there upon the rocks morning and evening in their expressive language have

told me that I am wrong ; and the twittering little birds, chirping loudly or softly, among the majestic larches and flowering shrubs and the thousand buzzing insects, all of them have told me that I was wrong.

Lady mine, with loyal mind and contrite heart, I confess to you to have done wrong just now in Nice with my exacerbated love, because it is never satisfied, with my rude jealousy that came from feelings awakened and repressed, with my brutal anger of a lover unrequited, of a lover despised, of a lover mocked at, with the mad anger of a mad dreamer who sees his dream destroyed. My lady, I did wrong to take offence at what you seemed to me in those days, at what you did, at the way in which you clothed yourself, with the persons to whom you granted your precious familiarity.

I did wrong to offend you for all this, to abuse you, even to threaten you. I am nothing to you : and being nothing I have presumed to enter into your life, to direct it, to dominate it, to make of it something of my own, only mine from afar, with the futile presumption of my love. I am nothing ; and nothing of yours belongs to me, not a tremble of your nerves, not a breath of your breath, not a beat of your

heart, not a thought of your mind : and you may say and do everything to abase or exalt yourself, to save or lose yourself, without my ever being able to interfere with the mean, wretched excuse of my love. My lady, how wrong I have been ! Why do I intervene constantly in your life ? Why do I intrude into your existence ? Why do I infest it ? Why do I seek to impose my will upon you ? Whatever right have I over you ? What am I to you ? And you, why should you permit so much, endure so much, why should you consent, even from afar and mysteriously, to this sentimental domination of mine, you who do not love me, you who have never responded to my love, you who have never answered me ? Yet are the signs that my fancy perhaps alone has seen and interpreted, the few, fleeting, illusive signs that my heart has wished altogether nothing, alas ! a nothingness of nothing ? How wrong I have been, my lady ! Here the trees and the waves, the little birds and the insects have been telling it me in all their notes for two days. They repeat to me in the open what within me my conscience was telling me at Nice, as I was stifling it on my pillow like the voice of Desdemona.

My lady, the man who is writing to you has done

an immense, incalculable wrong, that of loving you with a unique, absolute, supreme love and in believing that a like love could accomplish the most heroic, most wondrous deeds, in conquering your soul, your heart and your destiny.

A little, gentle wind rustles among the trees, and the leaves shake as if to pity affectionately the man's illusion : even the waves speak and say : " Why did you believe it ? Even love is a vain thing."

PAOLO RUFFO.

Nice, 3 March. . . .

I HAVE returned here, Diana, but I am shut up in my hotel room at the *West End*, and through the white curtains which have been pulled aside the divine bay shines in blue.

I am here, but I do not leave the house, because I do not wish to meet you with your jolly set during these last two days of the Carnival in which everyone here goes mad. My rage has fallen ; and at your feet I have confessed my wrong. But a deep, indefinable anguish holds me, something that fetters my soul, and I can't succeed in untying the knot. You saw my blind rage on that fearful evening

in which your laughter aroused in me a murderous anger : you must not see my despair. Perhaps you are masked with the Tchenicheff, La Rogué and the other women ; perhaps you still laugh with Motta Visconti and Wolkoff. I don't wish to see that precocious laugh, you who were *la grande taciturne*, the vase of election, the cup of sadness. I don't wish you to see me in despair. I am hiding myself. I am here where you are because I cannot live elsewhere : I am here in despair. To-day is the day of *Confetti*. With whom do you laugh ? I cannot even weep to relieve my anguish. Whatever, then, is this despair of mine ? I have never suffered so much for you, never. There is something unusual, unknown in my sorrow : I am frightened of it. What is there in the depths of my soul that I know not ; what is there that is fatal and unavoidable being prepared for me, and which must befall me ? Diana, I am afraid of my sorrow. You laugh, you . . .

PAOLO.

Nice, 5 March. . . .

O NIGHT of tenderness, night of joy, night of weeping ! The dawn is near and ever my soul,

overwhelmed by an intoxication of joy and sorrow, sends to my tired eyes a mist of tears. Diana, my lofty sadness, how am I to tell you what I felt and feel in this night that is the most consuming of my mortal life? How to tell you what is limpid as joy, dark as suffering? How to describe to you all that I am thinking and feeling in this night that is ending, when I myself know not how to fathom or measure the roots and power of my emotion? Diana, Diana, a few hours ago your voice reached me for the third time, your bewitching voice that I have loved and adored as the first of your virtues of fascination, the voice that twice has sung for me in passionate harmonies, that the third time has expressed for me what there is in the depths of the noblest and purest womanly soul!

Ah Diana, purest creature, that which I thought and imagined and feared has quite vanished, because your voice full of sincere and deep emotion has reached me, right into my being, that is impregnated with happiness and ecstasy, and again I am at your feet, purest of the pure! Since yester even, after two days of disconsolate imprisonment, in which I let the grey clouds descend upon me and hide from me everything beautiful, in which I chewed all the

ashes of life and drank of its wormwood, and an immense nausea was overcoming me, my soul gave forth a great cry of desire for you, and in a fury rushed I out, and precipitously I went in search of you everywhere throughout this town of luxury and pleasure which in these days is reaching the height of its festal fever. Another fancy-dress ball, the last, yester even, was again bringing together that glittering, strange, eager cosmopolitan throng in the theatre and the rooms of the Casino. Entering there a breath of the furnace, a breath of perfumes almost made me flee; a madness was causing that crowd of women and men, with masks and without masks, to burst forth in a tumult of laughter, cries and noise; men and women overcome by an unconquerable giddiness. I was very agitated through my desire of finding you again and in my horror of seeing you again in that furnace. Your jolly set was there, ladies and gentlemen, in a box and wearing their masks they were making a dreadful noise: they were hanging over the box, chaffing the crowd in the room, La Rougé especially, half-dressed like a *cocotte*, and the Bolgheri in a man's dress suit, and among them, how horrid! Lillette Fleury, whom they had brought into

their box, Lilette, one of *those*—well, we won't say ! But you were not there, you were not there, and almost a roar of joy caused my breast to swell as I fled away from that hell.

Above the deserted streets of Nice the sky was so dark, but so brilliant with stars, as I have never seen it in this sojourn of mine, that at first was solitary and peaceful and now is agitated and deranged. So many times in this night that has passed have my eyes been raised to the firmament, with that instinctive motion of the human soul that asks up there for succour, counsel, peace : the lively, luminous twinkling of far-off stars have never delighted my mortal eyes as last night in the immense exaltation of my love, you *who were not with the others*, you, my beauty, you, my chastity, you, my purity.

I returned slowly and in the silence and solitude of the streets I heard only my own footsteps : they slowed down before your *Hôtel Ruhl*, whose many balconies were illuminated, while the windows of the ground floor were resplendent which open upon the little garden with flower paths and palms that are in front of every hotel on the *Promenade des Anglais*. As I do wherever you may be, my Eurydice, lady of my dream, at Rome, at Ostende, in

England, wherever I have followed you in this my pilgrimage of love, wherever I may have met you, I stopped before the fortunate house that harbours your person, just as the pilgrim halts before every shrine before he arrives where his heart throbbingly presses him, and where he must bend the knee and beat the forehead to the ground. There beneath the undisturbed silence of the night, beneath the tender light of the twinkling stars, the pilgrim of love, who so many times has prayed, and sighed and wept, beseeching this grace, yet so many times—too many, alas!—has been disappointed; he at last, the poor, happy pilgrim has heard the voice raised for the third time that has changed his whole life, heard that wondrous singing of Diana Sforza, in which all her soul speaks, tells, expresses, weeps, in music specially composed to breathe forth immense interior suffering. Glued to the garden gate before the *Ruhl*—O *Villa Star* in Rome so burning in my memory—conquered by a mysterious force, I heard your voice, Diana, at first vaguely the musical notes in which the indescribable harmony is poured forth so sonorously, then better and better, issue from a balcony of the first floor, whose windows were open and soft white curtains

drawn. Suddenly to my senses, sharpened and exalted by desire, there reached me the caressing, intoxicating waves in which you were expressing the sorrowing mystery of Antonio Caldara, in his ancient air, that no feeling heart can hear without a throb, without compassion and weeping—*Come raggio di sol. . . .*

Diana, that ancient music, singularly and nobly pathetic, speaks much more in its sentimental expression than with archaic words, a little childish but still beautiful and sorrowful. It speaks of the ray of sunshine that sports peacefully on the quiet waters of the sea, and then suddenly tells of, with touching intensity of contrast, “*of the sea in whose deep bosom rests the hidden tempest.*”

Diana, Diana, I heard all my own being, all yours, pour forth in those notes revealing a measureless pain that no one knows of, that you were confiding to the silence, to the solitude of the night, in that room where I am sure you were alone. O cup of sadness, I heard you sing, for yourself, the words that unveil, that cry out, that murmur, finishing at last in the lament —“*while in its secret the wounded heart agonises and is in martyrdom.*” Oh, how indescribable was your voice, what a sight, what a

lament, what an inconsolable cry “agonises and is in martyrdom.” Why am I not dead in the street in an ecstasy of joy and sorrow. Why am I still living after having understood so much, after having understood everything ?

.

Diana, everything of your latest phase has vanished, the complacent smile, the precocious garments, the bad company and the cynical laugh, you who to the far-away stars of heaven told what your heart suffers in its hidden agony pierced by a mortal dart. All is far away and forgotten, Diana, because you are always *she*, the lady whom I have loved, the lady whom I adore, even as on the first day that I knew of her existence and fascination, on the kalends of May in Rome. You are suffering, Diana, and I throb with compassion for your pain, modestly hidden in the most secret recess of your mind and which you poured forth in song for the third time, speaking to me—I am sure of it, I know it, I will be sure of it—because you knew that I was listening for the third time, because you sang for me, as you wept for me, only for me, on your wedding-day. You are suffering, Diana, and I adore you: I am suffering with you,

through you, more than you ; but I adore you,
I adore you.

PAOLO RUFFO.

Nice, 7 March. . . .

You have suddenly left Nice, in what direction, with whom, to return when, at once or never, Diana ? I can't get information, I can't ask, all know me and you here ; I am afraid to ask, I don't know whom to ask. To-day I looked for you at Monte Carlo, at Beaulieu, and found you in neither place, and from whom shall I find out ? I ought to wait for you, I ought to leave, I ought to follow you, but where have you gone ? And did my last letter reach you before you left ? I am risking this despairing note ; perhaps at your hotel they will find out where you are, because I dare not enter the *Ruhl* and make enquiries about you. If it does reach you—I know not where—may it bring you, Diana, my despairing greeting, because once again I have been cast down headlong from a firmament of stars, where there vibrates your grand voice, into a darkness without sound, where I am alone and where it seems to me I must remain eternally alone.

PAOLO RUFFO.

Rome, March. . . .

O, MY great, my beautiful, my dear Rome which I have not seen for ten months, wandering in search of a shadow.

When I returned here a week ago it seemed to me that the city, mysteriously and mystically, clasped me with her maternal arms and that I rested upon her powerful and tender bosom my tired person and exhausted heart.

.

Who, then, is my sister Lisa, whose presence affords such security and such sweetness to the person who suffers beside her? She is a woman simple and sweet: that is all. She does not wish me to leave her again, and I feel that I cannot leave her, I who am suffering, I who am her brother, of the same blood.

.

For three weeks I no longer know where my dear shadow is. How my dear shadow was suffering on that evening, already sped, in which I heard the lament of her pierced heart, of her agonised and martyred heart! Then the sorrowing shadow suddenly disappeared: who knows where she is carrying her secret sorrow?

I asked nothing else from anyone in Nice during the few days I remained there. I have made no enquiries of anyone here. My Lisa is silent ; her silence is her form of compassion. After the tears shed by me, that my joy and sorrow called forth from the depths of my soul on that perfumed night in Nice, my heart has become as arid as a stone.

.

As an act of kindness, which now and then, not often, and ever more rarely I repeat, I went to visit Beatrice Herz, she who once upon a time was the mistress of my heart and senses, when it seemed to us two that our love was strong and lasting, whereas it was short and perishable, as is always the case. Beatrice Herz always receives me with a thin, palely affectionate smile, and I am gently affectionate with her, without doing or saying anything that reminds us of our past. I think she knows something of my mad passion through my long absence and illness ; but she does not know the person. Beatrice was a little sad, also I more than she. She did not try to console me ; I did not ask for comfort. I was immensely sad as I went away. How, then, is it that one can no longer love a woman who has been so loved as I loved

Beatrice ? Can a human creature become so indifferent ?

.

Diana Sforza is in London with her husband, Sir Randolph Montagu. They repaired there *then* direct from Nice. Her husband is waiting for a great diplomatic appointment, after having worked three or four months at the Foreign Office. Diana Sforza hopes with all her strength that this appointment may be Rome ; but this hope will certainly be disappointed. All this Pia Sergianni told my sister Lisa, whom she met at a religious conference. When my Lisa returned I guessed that she wished to tell me something about her who holds my soul ; her tender eyes almost questioned me, to beg me to speak. And mine questioned hers sadly. She slowly told me all. I listened silently with lowered eyes, feeling all my blood flowing to my heart. Ending a little sadly Lisa said :

“Diana Sforza’s hope for Rome will be disappointed.”

“Disappointed ” was the echo of my dull voice that repeated the discouraging word.

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Sir Randolph Montagu has been appointed first counsellor of the English Embassy at St.

Petersburg. Politically it seems that it is a post of high importance. Moreover, Lord Carnarvon, the English Ambassador to Russia is a bachelor, so the real ambassadress will be the wife of the first counsellor, Lady Montagu. To St. Petersburg, in a country so far off, in a cold land, in a land of exile, O dear sorrowing shadow !

Rome, 15 April. . . .

It was my voice that stammered " here she is " on seeing you yesterday, O beloved, O infinitely beloved, but my heart was awaiting you, in a secret presence ! You could not, no you could not, set out for the cold and gloomy land of exile, where your cruel and magnificent destiny has thrust you, unless you first came to say good-bye to your fatherland, all bright beneath the bluest of skies, all young and old, and yet smiling beneath its golden sun, all fragrant with the plants and flowers and herbs in the fields and gardens and orchards—Italy, Umbria, Rome, the country of your soul, Diana Sforza, the country of your beauty and your pride ! Oh, how I knew that you must come, although no one here told me, although no one was expecting you, further, although all believed you to be

already in Russia, so far away, too far away, amidst her snows of blinding whiteness, in that vast Slav land, at the court of the powerful Czar. I alone firmly believed that you would not leave us, Diana, without coming to say good-bye to us, before leaving us for such a long absence and to such a distant land ; I alone.

Oh Diana, my only love, and will you really leave us ? Will you leave me ? And shall I not come with you, shall I not follow you in your splendid and sad exile ? And must I not see you except now and then, perhaps every two years, in a chance meeting ? Perhaps I shall never meet you again in any land ? Diana, Diana, is it ever possible that this fatal separation must befall, and that I must lose you, who were my lady and have been snatched away from me ? Must I really lose you ? Shall I never see you again ? Your eyes were so full of an enchanting sadness as you looked at me yesterday when I met you beneath the trees of *via Veneto*. We were alone, you and I, and never have you looked so long at me, never with such infinite sadness—the sadness of your voice when it sings, the sadness of your tears when they course, all was in your glance ! Must I lose you ? Shall I never see you again ?

Oh what words of death are there, my Eurydice,
my love, my only love !

PAOLO.

Rome, 16 April. . . .

DIANA, how long are you staying here among us, near me, in Rome, in our Rome, before leaving for St. Petersburg ? Six weeks or perhaps two months ? Is it true that Sir Randolph is leaving you here, understanding and sympathising with your personal, deep sorrow ? You are alone I know, you have come from Perugia ; you go almost every day to Lady Melville's, to *Villa Star* : you wander through the streets and enter the churches and villas and museums as if to fill again your eyes and memory and soul with these great things, beautiful and intense in their spiritual and emotional life. Wherever you go, Diana, I cannot help following you, step for step, as if I were your shadow, to bless myself with the sight of you, of your figure ; to fill my eyes and heart with *you, you*, who will go away. Oh Diana, stay as long as you can in our Rome among us, for me and with me prolong this sojourn ; because I must lose you, because

perhaps I shall never see you again, because I think and feel that I shall never see you again. Stay, my only love.

PAOLO.

Rome, 17 April. . . .

THESE flowers which I am sending you to the *Excelsior* are our flowers; Italian flowers, Diana; violets dark as your eyes, roses white as your pure forehead, lilies of the valley white as your hands; and in the perfume that they exhale for you may you feel all that exhales from my heart that is so overflowing with sorrowful ecstasy for you. Diana, when I see you—I am always seeing you, I always know where you are—for my long devotion of love, for every humble, ardent sacrifice of mine, for my very life itself, which so often I have offered for you in this year of unique love, place a little bunch of violets at your waist, or a little sprig of lilies in your coat, or a rose-bud in your hand. Diana, the days are passing, life is flying, and since my terrible autumn in England that knot which ties my soul has not become unloosed, ever it chokes me the more, and now, at the limit of my desire, I see you and have you here

in Rome alone. Why do I choke with sorrow since you are here? Why, why? Diana, a flower for him who suffers from an indescribable sorrow, of which he himself does not understand the unknown essence.

PAOLO.

Rome, 18 April. . . .

BLESSED, blessed among all women, Diana, yester even, a few hours ago, you were wearing a bunch of dark violets on your white dress interlaced with silver threads, at the Costanzi Theatre, where you were with Pia Sergianni.

All the evening I looked at you and the violets which were mine placed at your breast. I waited for you in the lounge: you passed so close to me as almost to touch me. Your face was looking elsewhere, but your violets dropped withered. Oh, what an immense happiness is within me and how I suffer as I have never suffered!

PAOLO.

Rome, 19 April. . . .

DIANA, I wish to speak to you before you leave for Russia. Diana, I must speak to you before you go into exile. Diana, I wish to speak to you before losing you. . . . Diana, to speak to you, to speak to you!

PAOLO.

Rome, 19 April. . . .

DIANA, the year is almost completed in which I have heard you sing and have loved you, Diana, it has been a year of unrequited love. Diana, it has been a year in which this man has been prostrate before you while you see him not and leave him on the ground. Diana, I deserve that you should notice me just once, for the last time ; I deserve that you should let me approach your person, that you should let me greet you ; direct my words to you and tell you what I have ever written to you, for once only, for the last time. I am in a fearful lover's anxiety, I can no longer control such grief. Diana, *I must speak to you.*

PAOLO.

Rome, 28 April. . . .

WHY won't you do me this charity, Diana ? That which is permitted to the most insignificant man, why must it not be permitted to me ? Whoever is a gentleman, whoever is acquainted with one of your acquaintances, can be introduced to you, banally, stupidly—and I, no. And if I must not be introduced to you, Diana,

can I not come up to you simply in the street, in the park, in a drawing-room, in an hotel hall and greet and speak to you with simplicity? Diana, what must I think of your heart if, after a year of my passion, it refuses me this brief, fleeting comfort? What must I think of your soul, if it denies a secret moral succour to mine that suffers so much—far more than at first, as if it had reached the height of suffering? Are you, then, without feelings? Have you a cold heart, an arid soul? Are you cold and indifferent? Is it possible? Am I to be deceived in all the proofs of goodness which you have given me? Am I deeply deceived, Diana? Am I indifferent to her who never answers me? Is it possible?

PAOLO RAFFO.

Rome, 23 April. . . .

DIANA, for three days I have still been meeting you, because you cannot escape my lover's anxiety and my persistence. I have seen you five times in three days, far off and close to, everywhere you went after leaving the *Excelsior*. But constantly you have managed to prevent your eyes from meeting mine, never more so

than in these three days in which you have always perceived me even if I were far off. With a calm obstinacy your face has been turned away to the point opposite to where I was, and if, as this morning, an hour ago, I succeeded in defying your resolve not to look at me, as you were walking round the lounge of your hotel, where you were with two foreign ladies, it has gone ill with me. My ardent eyes met your glance—so cold, so strange, so distant—that my heart contracted, as if it were ceasing to beat.

And yet you are alone here, Diana Sforza, you are alone, Lady Montagu: neither your husband nor your sister keep you company or watch over you: the friends you see here remain with you but an hour. Lady Melville, your godmother, if she is often with you, if you are often at her house, does not watch over you. You are quite alone in Rome; you are free, Lady Montagu. You are come to Rome and I had thought, with the humility of my devotion, that among the things and persons dear to you you would wish to greet, before going so far away, into a country and among a people so different from us, that you would wish to see again him who for a year has loved you, him

who for a year has written to you—Paolo Ruffo. So I believe, and must believe, when, after seeing you again here, after the night at Nice, your thoughtful, sad, proud eyes were united to mine in a glance that intoxicated my senses like a kiss. So I believed when you wore in your dress laced with silver my little bunch of violets that languished on your bosom. But now I believe no longer, I hope no longer, I know nothing more, since you who are alone and free here, now when you see me show me a face of stone and your eyes always avoid mine, and nothing is more desolating than the marble indifference of that face and the turning elsewhere of those eyes.

You are alone, Diana : whom then do you fear ? You are free : who can force you, without ordering you, to show me openly your icy indifference ? You are alone : of whom then can you be afraid ? Of me, perhaps—poor wretch—who has learnt to love you for a year without any recompense and who asks to speak with you just once before your great departure ? Have you ever been afraid of something or somebody on your or my account ? Fear is an agitation of the nerves and spirit and you are motionless : fear is also a feeling and you are

without feelings. Perhaps you have never feared anybody or anything, not even me, especially me, and to you I am only a bold person whose boldness is vain, a rash nonentity, a person more annoying than strange. Is it so? Is it so? Am I not to you the little student, the little scholar, who has taken a violent, boyish, foolish fancy for a creature of much higher station than himself, for a creature who is inaccessible. Oh, Diana, this, this to a man who is thirty-four, who has lived and loved, who has a conscience and dignity. Diana, it is too much, it is too much!

PAOLO RUFFO.

Rome, 25 April. . . .

BE kind, I beseech you on my knees, Diana, in the name of my love—the days are flying, time is flying—come to-day to Villa Medici, where I shall wait for you from three to five. Villa Medici is open to the public to-day, but no one knows about it or no one goes there, because it is so solitary, and its shade is very dense, while there reigns there an immense melancholy. Come, even if I must not approach you, even if I must meet you alone, in a path filled with sad

twilight, come, even if I must only see you from afar under the old trees which are bowed down and have joined together their ancient, knotty branches : come only that I may not believe that yours is the least feeling and hardest woman's soul in the world, that has been uselessly loved by a tender heart like mine.

PAOLO.

Rome, 25 April, Evening. . . .

THREE mortal hours I waited for you, Diana, among the paths that are so dark of Villa Medici, among the ancient, heavy trees, upon a marble seat blackened with the years, from which the great entrance drive is to be seen. Three mortal hours in that stately, lonely villa whither I went at two and whence I did not leave until past five ; three mortal hours in which uncertainty, throbbing impatience, dull anguish, and ever a vain hope fought within me. Not a soul in the noble villa that Mazzarin gave to France and French art, not a passer-by, not a visitor ; I was alone, in fact, with my disappointment.

Towards six I saw you in the Piazza di Spagna standing before a shop window full of Roman pearls. You saw me, didn't you, at

your shoulder, reflected in the window opposite ? You bent your head a little. Piazza di Spagna is the way to Trinita dei Monti, to Villa Medici ; but it is also the way to so many other directions. Were you intending to come ? Why didn't you come ? Or am I deceiving myself ? Yes, I am deceiving myself.

PAOLO.

Rome, 27 April. . . .

DIANA, to-day my sister Lisa met you at Pia Sergianni's, where she had gone on account of some quiet works of religion and charity in which the Marchesa Sergianni affectionately helps her. My gentle sister returned a little time ago and an expression of bewilderment was on her loving face, and now and then her eyes were clouded with tears. She sat beside me and I looked at her all trembling, conquered by a great emotion : she took my hand and leaned her little head against my shoulder. Then in a very low voice—a whisper—she told me of having seen you at Pia Sergianni's, in all your pure beauty, but in all your lofty sadness. You only exchanged a few soft and sweet words—neither deep nor pregnant—with my sister

Lisa. They were sober words of sweet courtesy, nothing further, without an allusion, without a suggestion—nothing, nothing : and the silence between you and Lisa was all the more expressive. She told me that you smiled all the time you looked at each other in the short meeting in the Sergianni home ; and that nothing seemed more penetrating and touching to my sister Lisa than your smile. At a certain moment there was talk of your departure for Russia on the fifteenth of June—still six weeks hence—and the Marchesa Sergianni, who is very worldly and a big snob, congratulated you on the great post that you are going to fill, you who are already almost an ambassadress. You lowered your eyes over the pallor of your face and just said, in a murmur, the word “ thanks.” And nothing more moved the feeling, loving mind of my sister than your pallor, your veiled voice, and the single word of thanks. You rose, and after a sweet and courteous bow, you left. Nothing else. Lisa heard not from you either a protest or a lament or sigh—nothing. But she pitied you with spontaneous, tactful compassion which beautiful souls have for all secret sorrow that is nobly hid in its veil of modesty. Diana, you are suffering and Lisa understood ; she knows

and your smile causes her soul to melt with pity for your mysterious suffering "*while in its secret the wounded heart agonises and is martyred,*" as at Nice.

PAOLO.

Rome, 28 April. . . .

THIS morning I followed you, in hiding, from a distance. You did not perceive me as you left your hotel, in spite of the fact that you scrutinised the broad streets two or three times, then you set off down below, crossed the Piazza Barberini, climbed again and ended by entering the church of San Bernardo alle Terme. It was almost midday and a last Mass was beginning at the High Altar; the church was nearly full, you made your way right in front and remained for a long time on your knees in prayer. I approached you from the right nave, as near as I could, although always keeping in the shade, so that you might not see me. Seated, you read in your prayer book, bound in ancient style, an old book I thought; and the rosary chaplet with its holy medals hung from your wrist. You believed yourself perfectly unknown and alone in that church: and I saw you praying, as you

read in your book and mentally repeated your prayers, with continued fervour, often bowing your head in your hands, in simple and pure recollection. When the Mass was ended and the church began to empty you still remained on your knees, absorbed in your prayers. You rose and then very slowly made your way towards the church door; only a few people were remaining here and there. Then I could not resist my sentimental desire and joined you near the door, and, as you stretched out your fine, bare hand towards the stoop, I offered you the holy water, looking at you fixedly. You blushed as I have never seen you blush, to the roots of your hair—with anger wasn't it? Anger at the bold fellow? Without looking at me, pretending not to see my outstretched hand with the finger bathed in holy water to perform the Christian action, you did not touch my finger, you did not even make the sign of the cross, and with more rapid steps you disappeared.

O cruel, cruel, cruel !

PAOLO.

Rome, 30 April. . . .

JUST as in the church of *San Bernardo alle Terme*, in which I hid myself from you until the tragic moment in which I humbly offered you the holy water and you cruelly refused, so, last night, at Giovannella Farnese's, you did not observe me until I, no longer controlling my will, let myself be seen—and thus both times, if I had remained hidden, and had not let myself be seen, what a large draught of bitterness I should have been spared. For more than an hour you had been at the last ball of the great Roman season, without feeling my presence near you. Nevertheless from the moment you appeared in the vestibule of the *Excelsior*, in your great cloak of white velvet with the broad ermine collar, I kept following you discreetly at a distance; so I entered the Farnese palace in *via Capranica* a few moments after you, ascending the broad be-flowered staircase in your tracks, entering the vast anti-room when you were already in the majestic ballroom, and, in fact, dogging you for an hour without letting myself be noticed. Your eyes were always so wandering and distant.

Your dress of coral coloured tulle, of a bright

and pretty tint, heightened even more the whiteness of your face and placed around you, as it were, a sweet flame that encompassed you without setting fire to you: your neck and bosom were adorned with a singular necklace of brilliants with long fine strands, shining like rivulets of running water in the sun, and on the waving hair from temples to neck three great diamond stars, trembling on their invisible stems, shone as in a firmament. Last night I saw you in a new and strange beauty, glowing and yet marble, clothed in flame and yet pure and cold beneath the clear water of the jewels at your bosom, and the tender light of the stars on your head. Once again my tired, exhausted heart leaped and became exalted into a feeling of ecstasy where joy and sorrow were mixed. You were much surrounded at that hour, last night, Lady Montagu: you kept around you a little circle, especially of old diplomats like your husband, but also of young gentlemen. You danced twice, first with Von Rapp, the skilled Austrian soldier, the perfect dancer, in the whirls of the *two step*; then the Lancers with Guido Motta Visconti—that Nice man, he who by a miracle did not make me commit a crime—he is here in Rome and still runs after you,

attempting, or trying to, the scamp, the scoundrel, a fresh effort. But Veronica Ottoboni, still betrayed, still furious, still despairing, watches over him, follows him, threatens him with scandals. She is almost fifty and knows that he is her last lover. But you do not love, you will not love Motta Visconti or anybody, you who are so cold in your dress of flame.

You remained alone for a few moments : I watched your face little by little lose its fictitious worldly animation and become paler and more closed and the great dark eyes bend upon the ground. At that moment, as in the church of *San Bernardo* in which we were alone in the presence of our God, so at the ball in which we were among men, I could no longer resist the impetus of my heart. Giovannella Farnese, who is a kind of cousin of mine, and is fond of me like a sister, was passing in her blue dress, all pink beneath her riotous white hair :

“ Giovannella, I should like to be introduced to Lady Montagu.”

“ Don’t you know her ? ” she exclaimed, with a smile. “ She is Diana Sforza—remember. Come here.”

You saw us approaching together : at that moment you understood the inevitable. You

did not move upon your chair, your eyebrows did not give a quiver, your mouth not even a twitch.

“Diana dear, here is my cousin, Paolo Ruffo, who has asked to be introduced to you.”

With a smile Giovannella went away at once.

I bowed deeply to you as if before an altar : you bowed your head with a little, correct greeting. You did not offer your hand, not a word did you direct to me, and I stood motionless and silent. With a natural gesture you turned your glance about you on the spectacle of the ball ; and never again did your eyes rest on me.

Erect, silent, near to you but not too close to you, I seemed not to have been introduced to you, not to know you, to be some stranger, an unknown spectator of the festivity. How many minutes passed like that ? Eternal minutes, minutes eternal ! I felt them fall upon my heart like drops of molten lead. I did not know how to break the atrocious torture. how to leave you, you whom I have never known, you who have never known me, when Franco Montaldo came to remind you of your engagement for a dance. You rose at once without turning, without looking at me.

Never again shall we know each other, shall we greet each other, shall we speak to each other. I have loved you for a year with a useless love: ten years, twenty, could pass and this love would be still useless. So you wish it to be—useless. Now no harshness, no cruelty is unknown to you to make vain and useless my love.

PAOLO RUFFO.

Rome, 2 May. . . .

O EURYDICE, Eurydice, to-morrow are the Kalends of May, to-morrow is the anniversary on which my soul was taken and conquered by your voice. A year, a year of love, Eurydice . . . *who did not love Orpheus!*

PAOLO.

Rome, 2 May, Night. . . .

THIS evening—O recollections, that tremble in my anxious soul—the balconies and windows of *Villa Star* were illuminated and the great central conservatory had also its windows open—as a year ago. You were there, Eurydice. . . . *She turned her head towards Hades and remained there . . . a deep silence was over the villa . . . Eurydice remained in Hades . . . perhaps she wished to remain there.*

PAOLO.

Rome, 3 May, Morning. . . .

SHALL I hear this evening in reward for my devoted love, for my faithful service—a last, supreme reward—the voice that I have adored as if it were divine? Within a few days she who has so deeply moved and altered me with her singing, but she who has never responded to my emotion and my delirium, will be immensely far away, and who knows if my weak strength will permit me ever again to follow her? Who knows if she will not repel me cruelly, harshly, as the other day! Shall I hear, to comfort me, the beloved voice? I shall be watching all the evening, all the night, on this anniversary.

PAOLO.

Rome, 4 May. . . .

USELESS vigil, useless anxiety, useless love!

PAOLO.

Rome, 12 May. . . .

GOOD-BYE, then, Lady Montagu. May your pure hands receive this last letter of him who has so tenderly and patiently loved you, and

who only by these insufficient and unsuitable words traced upon white paper has been able to express to you his flame of love. I am not going to die, Lady Montagu, I who am a man and a Christian : I am not going to die, I am not going to kill myself. I am ceasing to write to you because I am ceasing to love you : I have ceased to love you.

Something great, greater than myself, is dead within me : it is my love. My mortal body continues to live although deserted by the love that used to nourish it and exalt it : my immortal soul will not leave this earth where never again shall it find joy or sorrow or hope. I cannot die, I must not die, I do not wish to die. My love that was lofty, that was strong, that was beautiful is dead : and you who alone knew something of it from my words powerless to describe it, you who could never either measure it or appraise it, you who when I, trembling and anxious, wished almost to compel you to hear from my voice its insistence, harshly and cruelly repelled it, you who created this love, in spite of yourself and your will, and even at a certain point destroyed it by your will, will not weep for its death.

For some time I was weeping over this love

that was declining and languishing and becoming exhausted within me. I shed over it the bitterest tears and believed I was shedding them for you, purest lady ; I believed I was mourning for your lofty virtue, and did not perceive that I was weeping because within me was ending a real reason of my being, because there was dying within me what had been a life a thousand times stronger than a thousand other lives taken together. When I wept in my little room in the *Rose of York*, at Sherborne, after having wandered a night like a sorrowing ghost in the park of Montagu Castle, it seemed to me that I was suffering for you, whereas it was my immense disappointment that had pierced my love with a mortal wound. I wept in London, in the delirium of my illness, at the nursing home in Bedford Street, and supposed that the weakness from my terrible illness caused the tears to flow, and my sister believed that I wept through the physical pain of my disease. When I wept with anger and rage at Nice and Cap Martin, believing that it was a mad paroxysm of jealousy that was tearing my breast, it was instead the deep throbs of a creature who feels that there is dying within him what used to form the knot of his existence.

Ah, that knot of anguish which used to bind me in England! That knot tightened on my agitated soul and nerves, that knot which I instinctively, dimly, tried to unravel and break, was my love, Lady Montagu, that was oppressing me and stifling me, before relaxing its last embrace in death. Have you ever, Lady Montagu, passed through a dense wood of oaks in the middle of autumn? All the leaves are coloured with the liveliest red, as if an impetuous river of blood were rushing through their vegetable veins: the wood was aflame and it seemed as if suddenly it must catch fire beneath the October sun. But if, in the middle of November, your slow steps on your return, lead you into the wood of oaks, all those leaves are of golden colour, and the dazzling transformation will seem to you a miracle of Nature. But, in truth, the flame of October is the last vitality of the leaves and the gold of November is their proud agony. When the leaf is all of gold it is already dead; the December wind will detach it in a whistling blast and will whirl it away. Like a leaf crimson with its last glowing blood, like a life refulgent with gold but dying, my love after a last impulse of life has been torn dead from my heart.

Lady Montagu, he who has loved you without compare, is now a miserable thing, a creature empty and arid ; so, because of this great misery of his, suffer him to tell you a simple word, a word of truth. Lady Montagu, I have ceased to love you, because you have not loved me, because you will never love me. With faith, with devotion, with unscathed constancy, my heart would have been yours, uniquely yours, if still I could have believed that it would be rewarded by you, even on a day far off, even by mere human sympathy, even by a gentle tenderness. O Lady, one can live without happiness, one cannot live without hope. And you have killed hope within me, silently and inexorably. I have understood, from every aspect of you, from every gesture of yours, especially from what *you have not done*, that, neither in the cycle of the years, nor in the mutation of events, nor in the changing of the heavens, would your pure, cold soul ever have been able to fuse itself with mine, in recompense for my long servitude of love. From the day in which I arrived at Sherborne, in the depths of England, in a morning in autumn, loving you, following you, seeking you, you, Lady Montagu, have obstinately fled from me ; and

every misfortune of mine—too late—and every love's suffering of mine—too late—has not found in you even outward pity for a stranger who is suffering. God alone saw us ten days ago, in the church of *San Bernardo*, when I performed for you a brotherly Christian act, the action of the hand that offered you the holy water: you would not touch my hand in that humble action. No one was looking at us, no one knew of us at that festival in *Casa Farnese*, nine days ago: you did not wish me to speak to you and kept silence, and snubbed me publicly. For a year, Lady Montagu, I have been your servant, your slave; I have confronted every danger, death has several times bound his thongs around me. But love needs to be nourished by something that is outside our love; love needs water to cause it to blossom like a living flower, like a sappy fruit; if nothing nourishes it, if nothing slakes its thirst, if nothing helps it to live, this love wastes, dries up, withers and dies. I am not a fool, I am not a child. I am a man with his desires and hopes, and, if even the slightest desire cannot be appeased, if even hopes cannot become a reality, why love more? Ah, into what infinite misery you have cast me, Lady

Montagu, now that my bootless love is extinguished !

Yet I crave your pardon, Lady Montagu, if I have been too deeply deluded by the signs that my anxious heart and leaping fancy have interpreted as your secret consent, granted not to my love but to my immense hope. In this my week of passion and death, like that of Our Lord, I have watched much, thought much and recollected much, in perfect clearness, of my sorrowful love story and I have understood of what a mad illusion I have been the victim—an illusion solely created by myself, a sublime and fatal illusion, for which you are not to blame, an alluring and false illusion, of which you are innocent. There was no sign ; no sign ! You sang thrice for yourself, for yourself only, and never for me ; you sang that your voice might reveal in its passionate singing, sonorous and sad, to yourself, to the night, to the silence, what was hidden in the depths of your mind. An illusion, an imposture, a lie ! You appeared to me at strange terrible moments as if my cry had evoked you, but it was chance, only chance, that caused you to appear.

You noticed me and picked me out from the crowd, you looked at me as if you had found me

again, as if you were greeting me with your glance that used to unite with mine, and it was all my fond mistake, my optical blunder.

The signs were nothing, nothing the things few and small and all the other manifestations, so transient and unsubstantial, everything that seemed to me of big importance, just because I loved you and hoped one day to be loved—nothing, nothing ! The black sash around your white dress, the tears on your wedding-day, the night greeting at Ostende, the flowers at the *Piccadilly Hotel*, and the flowers in Rome, always chance, nothing but chance, the unconscious cheating of my heart. Oh, pardon again, Lady Montagu, if, through those empty signs, those non-existing signs, I firmly believed you might come to me, that the road was long, but that step by step, drawn on by my love, you would traverse it all. Pardon, most virtuous lady, if I believed that you, Lady Montagu, who are to me the pure Diana Sforza, that you, the wife of another, could betray him, break your troth with him, violate all your vows, abjure the promise made to God and the law, slay the modesty of your soul and body, to love me, the unknown, the passer by, the unbidden guest, the intruder : to give yourself for ever

to the intruder in a supreme gift. Pardon me, Lady Montagu, for having believed with the bride in the Song of Songs that love was stronger than death. Love is less strong than virtue : it is nothing before your virtue, Lady. I have loved a woman : you are a saint. I kiss the hem of your garment, lady.

.

To-morrow, Lady Montagu, I am leaving Rome and Europe, on a very long voyage to the countries that are at the end of the world, and, if one of these mysterious countries attracts more than the others, I shall stop and fix my abode there for ever and never return again to my fatherland. I must become an exile. I must leave Rome and Europe, where I would still meet you everywhere, for I have vowed never to see your face again that used to enrapture me—everywhere I should find the traces of my useless love. If indeed the weapon that has wounded me full in the breast has not slain me materially, if time may heal this wound that still bleeds drop by drop, I am so weak, so sad, still so poisoned and overflowing with bitterness that exile is necessary for me. I am suffering from having loved : I am suffering from loving no more. My sister, Lisa, accom-

panies me into exile : she is accomplishing in silence a pilgrimage of sisterly affection. Lisa is leaving her home, her country and the cemetery where are her dead to accompany me in my melancholy exile. She is suffering deeply therefrom, but she does not say so : but greater would be her suffering if I were to leave alone. Lately we have realised through our lawyer sufficient money to travel far : gradually he will send us over there our modest income. We shall travel simply and live simply, like two quiet foreigners, my Lisa and I. No one knows the secret of our journey, except the man of law, who is bound by professional secrecy : no one will ever know. For a day there will be talk of us among those who loved us or believed they loved us, then no more. Thus we shall vanish, Lisa and I. My Lisa has no ties, and is bound to no one. I, having said farewell to you, lady of shining virtue, cold and pure as the mountain water, care no longer for anything or anybody. So we shall set off to-morrow and disappear before this letter reaches you. We shall set off to-morrow, suffering from this last detachment from our home, from our Rome, from our Italy, keeping silence together about our suffering, perhaps in time consoling ourselves over there

and, if never consoling ourselves, yet living together in melancholy and faithful companionship. Lisa is vowed to me in sisterly devotion : I bind myself to her with a tenderness the more constant for her great sacrifice. And the future shall bring nothing new into our souls and home except a sequence of equal and monotonous days with nothing but a sad and poignant resignation.

.

O you who were my Eurydice, O creature of my dream, O creature of my delusion, O Diana, Diana, my only love, my last love, O you whom I shall never see again with my mortal eyes, good-bye, good-bye !

PAOLO RUFFO.

. . . *Les autres jours ne viendront pas.*

MAETERLINCK - *Chansons.*

I

IT was now the fourth winter in which Lady Diana Montagu had arrived at Bordighera, in the first days of December to remain there until the middle of April : every year the *Hôtel Augst* had kept her usual apartments for her, in the full sun, in a corner of the first floor, a little hidden by a thick group of garden palms. In the first winter Lady Montagu did not come alone : her husband, Sir Randolph, had accompanied her, remaining a week at Bordighera, but going every day to San Remo where there were many English and heavy play, or to Monte Carlo ; then after a week he left. Directly afterwards Vivina Sforza arrived, the young sister of Lady Diana, and she stayed for nearly three months at Bordighera. In that season, in spite of the fact that she always had a tired appearance, Lady Montagu had gone out every day on foot, in a motor-car, in a boat, but often

she used to return very tired with need of rest and silence. In the same season the two sisters received many visits from friends who came from Nice, from Monte Carlo, from San Remo, laughing, noisy, invading the quiet *Hôtel Augst*, but often Lady Montagu left her happy and thoughtless sister to look after their guests while she retired to her room. Sometimes Vivina arranged to go for two or three days with friends to San Remo, Cap Martin and Nice, all vibrant with her fresh youth. When at the end of the season Lady Montagu left, with her husband, who had come to fetch her, for Petrograd, it did not seem as if the balmy air and the quiet of Bordighera had revived her rather scattered strength or re-coloured her white face.

The second winter Lady Montagu arrived accompanied by an English old maid, Miss Annie Ford, a sympathetic woman who had lived much in Italy and spoke Italian very well, a singular mixture of poor friend, lady's maid and nurse. Lady Montagu's great beauty was veiled by a weariness that sometimes she managed to master in public ; but which overcame her when she was alone with Miss Ford. That year she went out less : she preferred some short walk on the shore or on the hill, in

the fragrant woods that crown Bordighera, or else a carriage drive ; she no longer went in a car or boat. Occasionally she would go down into the garden, beneath the palms, remaining there for hours together, sometimes reading, but nearly always holding in her hands, which were too white, between the rather fleshless fingers, some art embroidery, which she pointed absent-mindedly. Sometimes Annie Ford, beside her arm-chair, would read a French or English book. Annie Ford was of a temper that was always serene, quickly attentive to every movement of Lady Montagu, appearing and disappearing, just to satisfy a little wish or small order of the beautiful Diana. Sometimes Diana of an evening, in her room on the first floor, would play the piano, but with the soft pedal, and gentle, light touch : sometimes she consented to sing but always *sotto voce*, with no other listener but Miss Ford. In mid-season Sir Randolph Montagu came from Petrograd to visit his wife, but he only remained three days without absenting himself at all, and then had returned more silent and more icy in his rigid Britannic physiognomy. Finally Lady Montagu went away with Miss Ford. The curious used to ask the best doctor in Bordighera, Mr.

Evans, an Englishman who had lived there for twenty years, if Lady Montagu were consumptive. "Consumptive, never! the beautiful Italian wasn't even ill: she was only very weak, a weakness that could be cured perfectly."

The third winter again brought Lady Diana Montagu to Bordighera in the strictest mourning, wrapped in the big black veil of grief, while the opaque black crêpe of her bonnet with the edge trimmed with white, told that she was a widow. That year, in the summer, Sir Randolph Montagu desired to add Alpine climbing to the other sports he practised with silent ardour; together with two friends he became a victim of a snow slide on the Mönch. Only ten days after the tragic accident were the three corpses recovered in one of the corridors of the great glacier, and brought back to Interlaken, perfectly recognisable. Sir Randolph Montagu by his will, that was dated exactly the day after his marriage, had left Diana Sforza, now become Lady Montagu, sole heiress of his fortune. Lady Montagu arrived in the very first days of December, earlier than usual, accompanied by Miss Ford, she, too, wearing discreet mourning, like her mistress and friend. In the stiff black garments, the tall, slender figure of Sir Ran-

dolph's widow seemed thinner, as if encased in an austere sheath of black crêpe, and the face, when she raised the long veil and threw it back, appeared of a bloodless whiteness, and waxen were the long, slender hands peering from the white wristbands, without a gem upon the five fingers, except the golden circlet of the wedding-ring. Bloodless the face that had once been so delicately pink, and white and opaque the fine forehead : the lips were very pale, where once, not so long ago, flowed the lively blood of youth, and there was a complete loss of bloom and decline on that face where beauty not long ago had had her noblest expression.

About her in Bordighera, where all knew her, and in the *Hôtel Augst*, there was, as it were, a tactful lamentation for her heavy mourning that she strictly kept, and for this loss of bloom, which became more marked in her black dress. Moreover her physical strength was much weaker ; the sudden blow of the tragic death of her husband, the solitude and the mourning that all at once had fettered her life, was bound to have had a deep reaction upon her. Now she only went out on a Sunday, to go to Mass at nine o'clock in the Church of the Assumption which is outside Bordighera on the road to Ospeda-

letti; and that not very long walk certainly tried her, for she accomplished it slowly, as if her breathing were failing her: beside her Miss Ford carried another cloak and a plaid which she placed round her knees, when the widow, almost exhausted, was seated in church, and had bowed her thickly veiled face in her hands. Thus she remained throughout the Mass, without ever kneeling, perhaps because she had not the strength to do so; but sometimes her head would rest upon her hands and would not be raised until the end. With a big sign of the cross she would rise and withdraw, wrapped up in her black furs, covered by the widow's weeds, scarcely bowing her head to the respectful greetings she received in the road, stopping to speak with no one, reaching her hotel very weary and out of breath, and at last entering her room where the logs burned in the hearth.

There she would place herself before the fire, bending her white cold face over it and stretching her icy fingers to the blaze without succeeding in warming them.

Her room was filled with the sunshine, the bright flicker of the logs and fragrant flowers: she would lie upon the soft cushions of a sofa and remain motionless with lowered eyelids,

the tender eyelids which had faint purple lines. Miss Ford flitted around her busied with a thousand little cares, without making any more noise than a fly, now and then stopping to look at the pale face and lips, and the closed, slightly purple lids of Lady Montagu, and the white hands, too thin, upon whose third finger, the golden circlet, now too large, hung loosely.

Diana Montagu did not suffer, did not weep, complained of no illness, but her abandonment, her detachment, her indifference moved the hearts of those who saw her in those long hours. But only Miss Ford and Célestine, the hotel chambermaid, used to see her thus : once or twice a week Mr. Evans came to visit her, and Lady Montagu would force herself to receive him as a visitor not as a doctor ; she rose, conversed with him, listened patiently to what he advised, accepting all his prescriptions ; she would offer him tea and afterwards when he was gone would fall into that torpor from which only now and then Miss Ford succeeded in dragging her with sweet violence. Doctor Evans now said less often in public that the beautiful Italian was not ill. Grumbling he would say : " She could get better if she liked ; she could get better," and nothing more would he add.

By ingenious methods, by tender violence, Annie Ford tried to get rid of the mortal languor by which Lady Montagu was allowing herself to be conquered. She sought to talk to her of Italy, of Rome, of Vivina Sforza, whose marriage with Sandro Falconi, of an ancient Perugian family, was imminent ; but after a few moments she would only reply with a nod of the head, her face would contract as if in annoyance at Annie Ford's voice. Annie would then be silent. But if she saw her again being overcome, she would bring her books for her to choose one that she should read to her : she would place below the cold, inert fingers some embroidery, to tempt her to work : she would bring her fresh flowers and, pouring them into her lap, would kneel before her with vases in her hand, so that Diana might arrange them without fatigue : then she would open the windows of the verandah, when the wandering singers stopped in the garden to sing "*Oi Mari*" or "*O Sole mio*." Yes, then Diana Montagu sat up, listening with attention, with a shadow of a smile on the lips that no longer had a drop of blood : so secretly Miss Ford made these singers come every afternoon. Sometimes Diana would get up and go to the piano, touching the notes

with one hand : sometimes in feeble voice she sang a *tornello* that Annie Ford did not know, but always the same, sad and passionate. Diana Montagu would rouse herself from her long silences when the post arrived three times a day. Annie brought the letters to her as soon as they arrived, so well did she understand Diana's silent anxiety ; then she vanished discreetly, as she saw the pale face change colour and the waxen hands tremble as they touched the letters. Later on when she entered Annie Ford understood from that face that had become more impassive, more indifferent, and more distant, that the longed-for letter had not come.

How many days passing by—one after the other—was this letter awaited ; and never did it come for weeks and months ! until at last Diana Montagu lost heart and despaired of ever seeing the arrival of the longed-for message, and all her disappointments united themselves to wear down her soul that had lived on a secret desire. She troubled herself no more with her correspondence, scarcely did she turn her eyes, ever veiled with an infinite weariness, when Annie Ford entered with letters and newspapers. She let them lie in a pile upon the

little table near her sofa : there the letters remained sometimes for hours and hours, and even days. Timidly once Miss Ford suggested opening them to Lady Montagu and reading them to her : she made a livid gesture of assent and raised not an eyelid during the reading. A telegram brought the joyful news of the marriage of Donna Vivina Sforza with Sandro Falconi at Perugia : Sir Randolph Montagu's widow had been unable to be present at the festivities on account of her deep mourning and poor health, but instead she had generously provided a dowry for Vivina, as well as sending her the most beautiful presents from Bordighera. In the message, Vivina and Sandro Falconi greeted and praised the beloved elder sister and promised to come and visit her within a few days, during the honeymoon. They came. With a deep effort of the will Lady Montagu strove to conquer for a short while her mysterious and habitual languor, she strove for and found within her will a fictitious and fleeting strength, she created an appearance less funereal in her weeds, her white face, and fragile person. In a gentle and gay excitement of love the young couple arrived : the almost daughterly tenderness of Vivina for her big, for her

magnificent, sister, as the little bride would say, the grateful and affectionate sympathy of Sandro Falconi almost seemed to warm a little Diana's cold and desolate heart. But the desire of travelling for pleasure in beautiful far-off countries, together and alone, again secretly seized the couple and conquered them. Nor did they understand how Diana Montagu must remain solitary, without comfort, in Bordighera, in a country not her own, with the solitary companionship of a dependant ; wrapped up in each other and in their dreams they did not understand that she whom they were leaving behind them was the vanishing shadow of Diana Sforza. A hurried kiss from Vivina on a cold cheek, a rapid kiss on a cold hand from Sandro Falconi, and the pale woman let them leave without saying anything more, following them with such a long peculiar glance which they, thoughtless and escaping towards their future, could not notice, a glance, expressive and suggestive, that frightened Annie Ford. The good woman bent over Lady Diana, who had fallen back motionless upon her cushions, and ventured to ask her :

" But what is the matter, your excellency ? What are you thinking about ? "

“That you certainly will see my sister Vivina again.”

“And your excellency?”

But Lady Diana Montagu turned her head aside and would not answer.

II

No one knew on which November morning, or evening, Lady Diana Montagu, together with Miss Ford, had arrived for the fourth year at Bordighera; if she had come by train or motor-car, by easy stages, as people said; for three weeks the people in the *Hôtel Augst* were unaware that she was in her usual apartments. She was not seen to go out, not even for Sunday Mass or a walk: she was not seen in the garden, or little grove of palms, where in other years she used to have her arm-chair and little table. Only almost every day Annie Ford would go to and fro in Bordighera, quickly but quietly, with her placid serene British face, where joy and sorrow never penetrated, through English shame of showing feeling. Some acquaintance of hers would stop her to ask news of Lady Montagu's health—

“Much better, quite well,” Annie Ford would invariably reply, with a smile.

Sometimes the questioner's face would show a sad incredulity.

"Please—really better—really quite well," insisted Annie Ford, as she withdrew.

Then on a day of warm sunshine in December, Diana Montagu appeared on her verandah, that was decorated with flaming geraniums; she sat there on a long deck-chair and remained there two or three hours holding in her hands a green parasol to protect her head from the sun. She was dressed completely in white, more than a year having passed since Sir Randolph Montagu's death: she wore a white fur cloak that covered her completely. Beneath the parasol one discovered a white face that had become as tiny as a baby's: and the hand that held the parasol was fine and fleshless, with nails too white and shining. It was said that in an attempt to cure her deep languor and fatal anæmia, she had now been ordered sun baths: so whoever passed in the morning, until noon, along the road beyond the hotel garden would turn to look at that little motionless face beneath the green parasol. At noon the sun disappeared from that verandah and Annie Ford, who was never far away, would help Lady Montagu to get up. The two women

entered the hotel again, a chambermaid came to carry away shawls, furs and cushions and the windows of the verandah were closed. Within a bright fire was burning. After having accompanied Lady Montagu to her sofa near the fireplace, and after having gathered around her everything that she could desire on the little tables, Annie waited for orders to remain or go. Lady Diana would give them with a slight movement of the hand. Usually she asked to be alone, but Annie Ford never went far away : from the next room she listened for a sound or a rustling. Usually there was an impressive silence that caused her anxiety, because when she was alone she no longer concealed her secret fear : it seemed to her as if Lady Montagu were not breathing. For nowadays her breath was so short and light. Sometimes Annie would hear a familiar noise : the turning of a key opening the locked drawer of a desk that was close to the fireplace, in reach of Diana Montagu : she would hear the rustle of papers that her mistress had taken from the drawer and she knew that for a long hour she would not be called. When the bell rang feebly, and Annie Ford ran to her, Diana's little face would be contracted in a gloomy and some-

times despairing expression. About her there were no traces of letters : they were locked in the drawer, perhaps until to-morrow. In a low, deep voice Diana would say to Annie :—

“ Read—read me something.”

“ What, your excellency ? ”

“ I don’t know,” the woman would murmur, gloomily.

At last it would be a book of philosophical or mystical meditations that Diana would point out. Suddenly she would grow tired of it and ask Annie to read some passage from the *Imitation of Christ*. She preferred the more bitter and gloomier passages where all the vanity, frailty and misery of human affection is expressed in hard and cutting words.

“ That is enough,” she would suddenly say.

And her great dark eyes would open widely in the little thin face, with the transparent skin, and it seemed as if she wished to look into the depths and beyond. Annie Ford was in despair : she caused the books of mortal sadness of the spirit to disappear and tried to say something comforting and kind, to draw back Lady Diana Montagu from that abyss of sorrow into which she seemed to be looking. Sometimes she succeeded. But one day in December, towards

Christmas, she had an immense fright because, after having waited a couple of hours for Lady Diana to call her, she ventured to enter and found her in a faint on her sofa, amidst a bundle of letters scattered around her. With difficulty she came to from that fainting fit, and on coming to she discovered the eyes of her humble servant full of tears, while a flood of tears had bathed Diana's little face. For the first time Lady Montagu buried her face in the bosom of her who served so devotedly. On the following day, at a certain hour, Lady Diana called Annie and said to her, with a strange glance and voice

“Annie, will you read for me?”

And she offered her a packet of letters.

“Aloud, my lady, aloud?”

“Yes. I am listening, Annie.”

The packet of letters was tied with a lilac ribbon: upon the silk these words were delicately embroidered in silver, “*What shall I do without Eurydice?*” So on that winter afternoon Annie Ford took the first letter, from the unknown to the unknown, and in her slightly guttural English accent read it to Lady Montagu. The Englishwoman gave no inflexion or expression to the love phrases, but every word seemed to penetrate the soul of her who was

listening, stretched upon her cushions of silk and satin, in her lilac dress of half mourning. Lady Montagu listened to the reading, and now and then her face changed colour, and her eyes seemed to be opened wide to gaze at a far-off vision, as if her lips were parting to speak or sing. For a moment the reader stopped, disturbed and moved as she looked at her listener, who impatiently nodded to her to continue.

Every day now, as the year rolled to its end, Lady Diana would ask Annie Ford to read to her just two or three letters in the order of their arrival, the shortest and the longest. With a mind bewildered, but full of pity, the woman accomplished her strange task, recognising that she could not refuse her, and experiencing in her simple mind a shock through a revelation of love much stronger than she had ever heard of or learnt about in the world. But now and then even Lady Diana could not bear that reading. Her breathing became troublesome : it seemed as if her life was ebbing as she gently plucked at the fur rug with her hands. The reader would stop in consternation and let the letter fall to the ground : she would try to succour Lady Diana in those crises that now occurred too often. One day the last letter was read slowly

by Annie Ford, in a trembling voice, without daring to stop or turn her eyes to her poor mistress who lay there, motionless yet attentive, who was silent but whose eyes glowed, dry and tearless, in their despair.

.
In a tempestuous and rainy January, in a damp and gloomy January in Bordighera, Lady Diana Montagu began to lose her little strength. Through caprice or an invalid's fear she would not keep her bed, and, as if she were a baby, after having dressed her in white and lilac, Annie Ford would lift in her strong arms the body that had become so little, with its satin and lace, place it carefully on the sofa near the fire and wrap it round with furs and pillows, leaving only the tiny face uncovered, where the eyes had become immense, where above the bloodless gums the bloodless lips parted with the heavy breathing. Doctor Evans came continually and preserved his calm aspect on coming and going, but now he no longer prescribed medicine, only strong restoratives; for his patient would no longer feed because everything gave her nausea. It was a cruel January in Bordighera, such as there had not been for years, without sun for the many invalids who

had come in search of it and needed it to live just a little longer in their endeavour to combat their disease. A cruel January; the teeth of the sick chattered in their heated rooms and those who waited on them were pale and anxious: a cruel January for Lady Diana Montagu, alone in her hotel rooms, far away from her own country and family which for some time had only written vague and scrappy news: a cruel January for Diana Sforza, upon whom only a dependant of another race and religion showered affectionate care in simple devotion. And it was to her that in an evening in February Diana Sforza spoke, slowly in a whisper, but expressing herself clearly:

“Annie, do you wish to please me?”

“Oh, Lady Montagu, of course!” exclaimed Annie Ford, bending over the poor little thin, transparent face.

“Afterwards will you search for Paolo Ruffo, Annie?”

“I shall search for him.”

“Will you search for him everywhere, Annie, will you look for him to the ends of the world: swear to do it?”

“I will look for him everywhere: I swear it.”

“When you have found him, Annie, you will

tell him this : ‘ Diana Sforza has always loved you : she has loved you from the very first moment.’ ”

And at these words her voice rose with solemn ardour, and a sob escaped Annie Ford’s bosom.

“ Oh, my mistress, my sainted mistress,” she exclaimed through her sobs.

“ I did not wish to sin, Annie,” said Diana Sforza simply, “ I had promised and given my oath. I have broken his heart and my own as well ; tell him, Annie, my own heart that was his ! ”

There was a heavy silence in the room. Diana Sforza stretched out her little hand to touch that of her devoted friend, and added in a strange voice :

“ Perhaps Paolo Ruffo is dead, Annie.”

“ Let us hope not.”

“ Perhaps he is dead, Annie. Last year when I lost Sir Randolph, I was free. I had a notice printed in all the papers to call him back. He alone would understand its meaning.”

“ Well, my lady ? ”

“ He has never come, Annie ; he has never answered.”

“ Perhaps he has never read it, my lady.”

"Perhaps Paolo Ruffo is dead," said Diana gloomily, "and he will never know."

With bowed head her companion was silent, And suddenly like a rending cry there escaped from the exhausted bosom of Diana Sforza :

"Search for him, search for him everywhere. Tell him that I loved him from the first moment : tell him that I have never ceased to love him."

.

The heart of Diana Sforza ceased to beat on a warm, bright morning in February : the short breath flickered out between the white lips, and beneath the soft veil, with which she used to cover her face in her last days her great dark, sad eyes were closed for ever. In her last days Diana Sforza seemed neither to regret her beauty, nor her youth, nor the soft caresses of the spring, of the sun and the sea ; she seemed detached from all the sweet trammels of earth and indifferent to every dream and desire. To her who nursed her in the last days she made no acknowledgment not even with a smile, and on the last day not even to the pressure of her hand, and inasmuch as within her an invincible attraction to death had been substituted for a powerful attraction to life, she expired without

saying good-bye to whatever she was leaving on earth.

Annie Ford who had faithfully and tenderly served her, brought back to Perugia the coffin with the silver bosses, where whatever remained of such grace and fascination returned to the family sepulchre of Casa Sforza. Afterwards, with the generous legacy that Diana Sforza had left her, Annie Ford kept her oath. For months and years she sought for Paolo Ruffo: she sought for him everywhere. Everywhere she asked for news, but never in any country did she come across the man; no one ever gave her news of him, and at last she tired of the search. Thus the dead woman in Bordighera was disappointed even in her last despairing wish, for no human voice proclaimed in the presence of Paolo Ruffo the revelation of the love, the virtue and fatal sacrifice of Diana Sforza.

Naples.

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